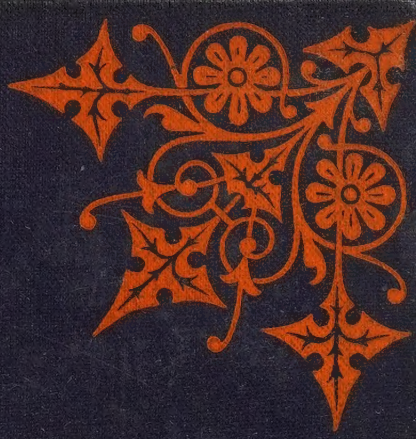


FIDE ET
FIDU CIA

FIDE ET FIDUCIA

THE UNDERGRADUATE

A Sketch

BY

ROSS GEORGE DERING

AUTHOR OF

"GIRALDI; OR, THE CURSE OF LOVE"

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON

RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON

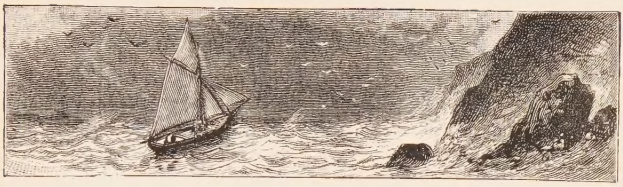
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen

1891

[*All rights reserved*]

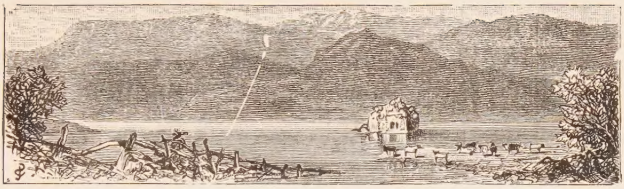
Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/undergraduateske00balf



CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THE FOUNDATION OF EUSEBIUS APPLEYARD	1
II.	FRIENDS IN COUNCIL - - -	36
III.	'SOCIETY' IN SOUTHAM GARDENS - -	69
IV.	DEACONS DINING - - - -	118
V.	IANTHE - - - - -	163
VI.	THE CONSPIRATORS - - -	214
VII.	DANGER AHEAD - - - -	260



THE UNDERGRADUATE

CHAPTER I.

THE FOUNDATION OF EUSEBIUS APPLEYARD.

By the time that the Rev. Robert Miller, M.A., minister of the Queen Street Congregational Chapel at Seaborough, had reached the mature age of forty-eight, he had fairly made good his claim to that vague though enviable particularity which is best expressed by the word 'eminent.' A fair classic, a remarkable mathematician, and a conscientious student of modern literature, his position both in the town

he inhabited and the religious body to which he belonged was no mean one. There were many congregations in the surrounding districts by whom an anniversary sermon by Mr. Miller was esteemed almost as high an honour as one from any of the great lights in Birmingham, Islington, or Regent's Park; and if some of his methods of exegesis were a little puzzling—because novel—in the ears of such occasional hearers, there could be no doubt of his high culture and general intellectual elevation. Nor was it only within the confines of Dissent that the eminence of Mr. Miller was acknowledged. Before settling in the fashionable watering-place which was his present home, he had resided for some years in a great University city; and the University, in recognition of his unusual eminence in mathematical science, had conferred upon

him the honorary degree of M.A.,—in token of which his black silk pulpit-robes were ever afterwards enlivened by the addition of a handsome crimson hood, worn with the coloured lining, both in front and at the back, carefully turned outside. In addition to his scientific attainments, Mr. Miller wielded a very able pen, contributing 'thoughtful' articles to the *Spectator* on such subjects as 'The Relation of the Higher Animals to the Nicomachæan Ethics,' or 'The Hedonistic Impulse as a Factor in Religious Evolution,' as well as letters to the editor, signed with his own name, dealing with questions of Church polity regarded in the light of Disestablishment. For the minister took a deep, and it may be personal, interest in the operations of the Liberation Society, as calculated to smooth the way towards a reunion of Protestant

Christendom—an object the attainment of which he dearly longed for; holding that an attitude of jealous animosity to the Established Church was incompatible with all broad and enlightened views of Christianity, and regarding its connection with the State as an unfortunate, but not indefeasible, obstacle to an amalgamation with it of all Christian sects whatever. It was curious, too, that Mr. Miller's sympathies with the Evangelical party were not of an enthusiastic order; and it was clear, from the general tenor of his mind, that, had his fate been cast within the fold of the Establishment, he would almost certainly have been a moderate yet very decided High Churchman. But, as things were, he was a sturdy Nonconformist, one who would willingly further negotiations for reunion on the basis of Disestablishment, the

voluntary principle, and Prayer-Book revision, did circumstances ever vouchsafe such possibilities, but rejoicing in the meantime that, while the Church of England moved in fetters, that branch of Protestantism to which he belonged was free from all State control.

Now the chapel favoured by the ministrations of this eminent divine was a very handsome structure. Outside it attracted attention by the stateliness of its proportions and the elegance of its tapering spire; while the interior was enriched with beautiful fretwork in dark wood, a noble stained-glass window, an elaborate pulpit, costly carpets along the aisles, and an organ altogether larger and finer than the one in the parish church. Nor was it only for architectural beauty that Queen Street Chapel was celebrated. Its antiquity, or, rather, the antiquity of its foundation,

constituted a still higher title to prestige. The present edifice was not more than four or five years old, but it was the lineal descendant of a very venerable and illustrious conventicle, poor and mean indeed as to outward show, but the home of some of the bravest and most devoted of the early Brownists, built and endowed for the 'free worship of Almighty God' in 1662, the very year of the Act of Uniformity, by one Master Eusebius Appleyard, himself a very eminent member of the society. Master Appleyard was a man of considerable substance, great determination, unquestionable sincerity, and exceedingly narrow views. As regarded his opinions that any communion whatever with a State Church was an offence which stank in the nostrils of Omnipotence, that the only pure community was one based upon the individual

acceptance by all its members of the plain teaching of Holy Writ, and that every word, jot, tittle, comma, and semicolon between the covers of the Bible was severally and plenarily 'inspired' — no difficulty ever arose; thus far, Eusebius Appleyard and his co-religionists were at one. But when, instead of stopping at this point, he so seriously overstepped the bounds of moderation as to extend this theory of inspiration to his own particular system of hermeneutics, he made the judicious grieve. Many whose fathers had 'sat under' precious Master John Robinson of Scrooby, and imbibed something of his generous and enlightened spirit, were much stumbled at these pretensions of Brother Appleyard's; so they took leave to reason with him in a spirit of meekness, and to warn him against reliance upon the vagaries of an unchastened

intellect. Whereupon Eusebius Appleyard, in holy anger at their spiritual blindness, collected around him some personal adherents, to the number of nearly a hundred, built and very handsomely endowed a meeting-house of his own, drew up a trust-deed, embodying the precise doctrines which should be preached within its walls, and—in order, no doubt, to provide against any infringements of the articles as long as he should live—assumed the pastorate of it himself. Years passed, and Master Appleyard and his congregation with them; the old tabernacle grew rickety, and had to be replaced by a new one; the site of it rose mightily in value, and its sale increased the resources of the foundation; religious toleration grew apace, the church flourished and waxed fat, and finally attained the respectable, celebrated, and (in a word)

eminent position in which we have now discovered it under the ministry of Mr. Miller.

It will readily be conceived that the style and matter of Mr. Miller's discourses differed widely from those of the discourses of Master Appleyard. The minister of Queen Street Chapel was in every way a clever and successful preacher. On Sunday mornings his sermons generally had a metaphysical smack about them; the text served rather as a suggestive motto for a scholarly disquisition upon some subtle theorem of theological casuistry, than as representing the actual argument or occurrence in connection with which it was written; the expositions, illustrations, and applications being flavoured more with the freshness and audacity of modern thought than with the spirit of the fathers of the sect. In the

evening the difference was marked. It was tacitly understood, and expected, that the sermon should be addressed emphatically to 'the unconverted' portion of the audience, and the consequence was that the entire service, as regarded both psalmody and exhortation, was of a more emotional and exciting nature than the morning exercises. Of course the prayers were all extempore; though every now and then the minister would interpolate a collect, or a few sentences from the General Thanksgiving, which stood out in very effective relief against the background of his own petitions. Not that Mr. Miller's extemporaneous efforts were at all to be despised or carped at—quite the contrary. In fact, he had a decided talent for public prayer. He was never vulgar; he eschewed anything like familiarity; he avoided over-communicativeness,

or any appearance of a desire to impart information; he was careful never to offer an opinion, especially upon a doubtful point connected with what might be considered the foreign policy of the Divine government; and although he was fervent and devotional, he was always scrupulously polite. The fact was, that he had once received, in the person and at the expense of an eccentric friend, a very telling lesson. The friend was a suburban minister of some reputation, with whom he had on one occasion exchanged pulpits; and on his return from Norwood he had found his deacons in a state of suppressed excitement, bordering on consternation, at something that had taken place upon the previous Sunday. He soon discovered that it was a prayer. The Rev. Mr. Dribble was a man who evidently held very comprehensive views as to what

constituted a fitting subject for public thanksgiving, and it appeared that he had considered it no more than common gratitude to thank the Almighty "for the smell of hay, and the pleasant reek of seaweed upon the beach; for the joyous yelp of dogs, the babbling of unconscious infancy, the lowing of kine beside still waters, and the gift of their nutritious flesh. For laughter, for jocund songs, and for books of clever nonsense, we thank Thee, O God—nonsense which is pure, nonsense which is side-shaking—and for the sense of humour to appreciate it; for these and all other wells of refreshing and glints of sunlight which may alleviate the hardships of our way—even for the easy slipper and the warm fireside, the soothing novel and caustic review: *all are Thy gifts,* O Giver of all good things!"

Two deacons supported and encouraged the Rev. Robert Miller in the duties of his pastorate. One was a Mr. Henry Gervoise, the leading banker of the town; a mild and gentlemanly man, rich in this world's goods, given to the furtherance of philanthropic undertakings, and imbued with a very strong Evangelical bias. The other was a wealthy haberdasher, who inhabited a pretentious villa on the outskirts of Seaborough, and exercised no small influence in the councils of the church. Mr. Searle—or, as he was invariably referred to in the advertisements of public meetings, J. Walker Searle, Esq., of Fairlight Villa—was a short, bustling, rather overdressed personage, with small, twinkling gray eyes, a prominent nose, and an air of conspicuous affability towards all who approached him with respect. His religious views were extremely decided,

verging closely upon the Calvinistic. Not that he called himself a Calvinist by any means, but that it appeared to him an impossibility too wild for thought that so eminent a supporter of the Town Council, the Board of Guardians, the County Lunatic Asylum, the Mutual Improvement Association of Serious Tidewaiters, the Society for Promoting the Study of Counter-point among Bathing-women, to say nothing of the Queen Street Independent Chapel itself, could by chance have been overlooked in any equitable system of predestination. Mr. Searle's drawing-room, where the Drawing-room Prayer and Reading Meetings were held on the first Monday of each alternate month, was a very grand apartment—glowing with girandoles, plate-glass mirrors, heavy gildings, and bright crimson silk; and it was Mr. Searle who decided the

question as to the proposed adornment of the new chapel in the very latest style, by asking with what face they dared to put the Almighty off with plain wood and whitewashed walls, as long as they enriched (and very justly enriched) their own houses with costly decorations. Of his two deacons, the minister preferred the former; but he was very careful not to say so, and as no one ventured to contradict the influential haberdasher when he posed as the keystone of the entire organization, the happiness and self-complacency of Mr. Searle were without a cloud.

These three gentlemen, therefore, constituted the Government of the Independent chapel; and they enjoyed the support of a very considerable majority of the church-members. But there was also an Opposition—not a very large Opposition, it

is true, being, in fact, numerically somewhat insignificant; but an Opposition, for all that; and the leader of it was a certain man named Boyce. This Boyce was a small tailor, living in an obscure part of the town—a person of cantankerous disposition, never so happy as when in possession of a grievance, and much given to stirring up dissatisfaction among the few church-members who formed his following. The meanness of his social position, together with his personal ignorance and lack of education, put him, of course, at some disadvantage; but this misfortune was to a certain extent counteracted by the fact that he was the oldest living member of the Queen Street church, and had for some years held the office of deacon before the advent of the Rev. Robert Miller. It was then that the change took place which ousted him from

his cherished dignity, and from that time he had maintained an attitude of suppressed though bitter hostility to the new administration. He quarrelled with the doctrines promulgated from the pulpit; he had been a most vigorous opponent of the decorations lavished upon the new chapel; he asked captious questions about every other item in the yearly balance-sheet; and although he had never once succeeded in carrying an amendment to the prejudice of the authorities, his failures, instead of discouraging, only spurred him on to the elaboration of fresh schemes. In person he was short and thickset, with a large sallow face, high cheekbones, sleekly-brushed black hair, and small eyes; and his manners were as scrupulously civil as those of a dishonest servant who watches every opportunity to betray his master.

Our story opens on a certain Monday

morning in the early spring. The minister, feeling a little weary after the Sunday's labours, sat at his study-table, *Spectator* in one hand, his paper-knife grasped in the other, eager to see whether any correspondent had replied to his letter of the previous week on 'Accountability and Determinism.' A personable man, of distinctly clerical exterior; black-haired, black-whiskered, straight-coated, high-waistcoated, and white-cravated; with sharp, clever dark eyes, a broad forehead, and a firm hand in excellent preservation. Slash went the ivory blade, severing four pages at a cut; slash, slash, more leisurely, and the coveted sheet lay open before him. Ha! He thought as much.

"SIR, — The audacious paradox propounded in your last issue under the above heading——"

But the cup, just tasted, was here quietly but remorselessly taken from his lips. A tap came at the door. Mr. Miller murmured "Come in," and the shadow of a not unnatural impatience passed over his brow as Mr. Josiah Boyce, tailor, church-member, and ex-deacon, stood before him.

"Well, Mr. Boyce," said the minister, in a tone rather of resignation than of welcome, trying to force a smile, but contriving only a grimace. "What can I—— And are you pretty well this morning?"

"Thank ye, Sir; thank ye," replied the visitor, making a high-shouldered bow, hat in hand. He spoke in a high-pitched, wheezy, but studiously modulated voice, and kept his eyes upon the ground, clearing his throat preparatively. "It's a fine mornin', but coldish—coldish," he

continued, taking a seat with much deliberation, and carefully depositing his hat beneath it. "And I hopes you're pretty well, Sir, after the exercises yesterday?"

Mr. Miller thanked him. He was pretty well.

"Monday mornin's a kind o' hoff-day with ministers," continued Mr. Boyce cheerfully. "I'm not one o' them as is always encroachin', I 'ope; I know 'ow vallyable your time is, sir. And I've always been against ministers bein' continually at the beck and call o' their congregations. Them as preaches the Word must have time to prepare the Word. But there's some—I know there is—as don't take that into account."

Mr. Miller hemmed, and looked inquiringly at his interlocutor.

"Now, that sermon last evenin'," re-

sumed Mr. Boyce, in a meditative tone, "that wasn't prepared in a minute, anyone could see. You never made a more stirrin' appeal, Sir. There ought to be a great ingatherin' after that sermon. Did you notice old Mrs. Tibbins, Sir, in the front row o' the gallery on the left? I seed her weepin' copious; I 'ad my eye upon her all the time. And that young woman from the pastrycook's in Targate Street; she was 'ard 'it, if ever a young woman was. It's strange how the Spirit blows, though. Blew right over *some* 'eads last night—never touched a hair of 'em! Instead o' openin' their 'earts to the influences, they criticise and pick 'oles. Don't you meet with discouragement at times, Sir?"

"Well, I suppose so," replied Mr. Miller, with a slight smile. "One mustn't expect to work miracles, you know. It's enough

if we can establish an upward tendency, and maintain a tolerably high level of Christian principle."

"Very true, Sir; very true indeed," said Boyce, with fervour. "And yet there's some as don't see that—no, they don't see it. And then they blame the minister! What do you suppose, now, I've 'eard members say about that sermon o' yours on Jacob's Vow, Sunday was a week? Ay, and influential members, too. Why, they say——"

"Come, come, Mr. Boyce; no tales, please," interrupted the minister, flushing. "I wish to hear no tittle-tattle. If any friends have anything to say to me about my pulpit utterances they can come and speak for themselves; I shall be only too glad to hear them. But I don't want such remarks repeated to me on hearsay."

"Well, Sir, well," said the disappointed

tailor deprecatingly. "I'm sure it 'd be a good thing if everyone 'ad your Christian spirit; there'd be less 'eartburnin's among us, less backbitin'. And then one can't please everybody, so p'raps it's no use tryin'. Anyhow, you ain't no worse off than Paul was, Sir. Look at Paul, now. Look at 'is thorn in the flesh. Look 'ow '*is* congregations fell off, and went against 'im as soon as 'is back was turned. What did Paul say? 'I wish they was cut off as troubles you.' There's a many congregations besides Paul's as 'ud be the better for a little cuttin' off, I think—roots o' bitterness as ought to be dug out—tares as ought to be pulled up. Well, Sir, I'll say no more. I meant well, but least said's soonest mended; and them as don't get their dues here will reap their reward hereafter."

Thus Mr. Boyce, with a smile of

insinuating resignation. The minister watched him for a moment, and then, tapping his fingers with the paper-knife, said :

"Had you anything else to say to me this morning, Mr. Boyce ?"

"Only about the meetin' to-night, Sir," replied Boyce guardedly ; "of course you'll be with us ?"

"What meeting ?" returned the minister. "At Mr. Searle's, you mean ? That is this day week."

"It's not that, Sir," said the leader of the Opposition, bracing himself for the contest. Mr. Searle's, indeed, where he, the oldest member of the church, had to sit on a hard chair at the very back, where he had to put up with a stiff nod from the deacon's haughty wife, where he was never so much as asked to offer a word of exhortation or engage in

prayer! "I leave Mr. Searle to arrange 'is own meetin's, Sir; I never interfere with *them*, as you well know. I meant the meetin' in the schoolroom, Sir, with ref'rence to gettin' up a Scriptur' exposition class among the young people o' the congregation on Saturday evenin's. There *is* to be a motion, so I've 'eard, to make me leader o' the class, Sir. And we was 'opin' for the privilege of your presence in the chair to-night."

"I cannot possibly come," said the minister quickly; "I'm very sorry, but I happen to be dining out."

"But you promised, Sir," said Boyce.

"Promised?" exclaimed the minister. "What can you mean? When did I promise to be present at this meeting?"

"Last Tuesday, Sir," replied the other; "'twas just as you was leaving the vestry-meeting. Come, Sir, surely you remember.

I 'ope you won't go back on us now. I've told them as you *are* comin', and there'll be a good deal of dissatisfaction if you disappoint us."

"You had no grounds for making any such statement," said Mr. Miller, very much annoyed. "I have a certain recollection, now, of your saying something about a meeting last Tuesday; but I also recollect that somebody else was speaking to me at the same moment, and that I made no reply. How could you possibly go away and tell other people that I had promised to attend?"

"You did not refuse, Sir; and in such cases silence gives consent," said Boyce boldly. "It's not for such as me to teach the likes o' you, Sir; but when you've allowed me to think for nearly a week as you intended to come, and now turns round upon me——"

"Stop, Mr. Boyce!" interrupted the minister with great severity. "Do not add another word. Upon your own showing, you have deliberately announced to certain members of my church that I had promised something which you know as well as I do I never did promise. I see it all now. You tried to entrap me into supporting, with my presence, a project of your own, of which you were not sure I should approve; and you took advantage of my accidental omission to answer your request to spread a false report upon the miserable subterfuge that silence gives consent. For shame, Mr. Boyce! for shame!"

Boyce sat, silent and glowering, with his small eyes fixed upon the floor, rubbing the palms of his large hands together nervously.

"I think you're 'ard upon me, Sir," he

said at last; "indeed I do. I thought I was acting for the best. 'Tain't every minister as 'ud say such words to a man as 'd been a member of 'is church for 'ard on twenty year. Still, there's comfort even for such. 'Blessed are ye when men shall speak evil of you——'"

"'Falsely, for My sake!'" thundered the minister. "Do not add to your fault by so fearfully misquoting Christ's words. Rather suffer rebuke, and seek not to offend again. But we will drop that subject now. Tell me more of this project of yours, of which, remember, I know nothing. A class for the exposition of Scripture, I think you said? Pray who is to be the chief expounder?"

"They do think of askin' me, Sir," replied Mr. Boyce.

The minister sat looking for a moment at the man before him, the faintest

suspicion of a half-scornful, half-diverted smile hovering round his lips.

"And what are your qualifications for the office?" he asked at length.

"Well, Sir, there ain't many as knows their Bibles better than me," said Boyce with recovered spirit. "All the day long is my study in it. And I've one infallible guide, a principle as keeps me from goin' wrong—*I never seek to be wise above what's written.* Ah, if only some of our teachers would do the same! It's too much learnin' as obscures the meanin' o' Scriptur'—too much learnin'. A man comes to me, and says 'e, 'What d'ye make o' these 'ere new theories?' says 'e; 'ow as the world's millions o' years old; 'ow as there's sixty or seventy elements instead of four; and 'ow as somebody's made a sort o' spyglass to find out what's burnin' in the sun?' Says

I, Sir, 'Is it *rewealed?*' I don't want no other test. Find me all that in the Bible, and I'll believe it; but if you can't, why then, I say, 'Scientific bosh.' And the same with everything else. Take theology, for instance, or morals. Tell me I ought to do this, or believe that, and I say, 'By all means, if it's rewealed. Show me your text!' And if he can't, then, of course, there's an end of it. Well, Sir, that's my secret. It's a very simple one, but you can't go wrong if you only stick to it. The plain Word o' God, Sir, 's enough for me—'the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.'"

"I'm not inclined to dispute your qualification *so* far," remarked the minister, smiling broadly to keep himself from laughing aloud. "I take it for granted you're familiar with the Greek Testament?"

"I know no Greek," replied Boyce with complacent simplicity; "I'm independent of Greek, Sir. If Greek was necessary for us to understand the Scriptur', we should 'a been born to talk Greek nat'ral. Of course," continued Mr. Boyce with the candid air of a man who makes a damaging admission, "of course I know the Testament was wrote in Greek originally. But who's the man as 'ud say the Almighty's been permittin' of us all this time to be putt off with a translation as isn't as correct as if it was inspired? Inspired? Of course the translation's inspired. Why, there you 'ave the proof of it!"

Mr. Miller went to his bookshelf, took down a volume, turned over a few leaves, found a place, and then handed it to Boyce. The pages had a queer look. In the top left-hand corner of the left

page there was a short paragraph printed in type that Boyce had never seen before, while all the rest of the space consisted of paragraphs in English.

"Look at this," he said. "That verse at the top is in Greek, exactly as it came from the pen of the sacred writer. The English verses which follow are all translations of it; they are all different; and no one can say with any certainty which is the proper rendering. Perhaps you can set them right, and tell us all which of these conflicting versions is the inspired one?"

The face of Mr. Boyce for a few painful moments was a study. He peered up and down the page, knitting his eyebrows, and muttering incoherently to himself, while the minister stood watching him with interest. Suddenly his brow cleared.

"It's the Greek, Sir, as is the snare to ye. If you didn't know Greek, ye'd never have got into such a fix. The thing's as clear as daylight. See which of these 'ere versions *is the one in our own blessed Bible*, and pin your faith to that!"

"You're a shrewd man, Mr. Boyce," said the minister almost admiringly. "But all the same, I have my misgivings about this scheme of yours. I very seriously doubt whether I can sanction it. At any rate, it would have to be submitted to the officers of the church; and if you like, you can see them about it."

"But you'll promise me *your* good word, I 'ope, Sir," urged Boyce, a mulish look coming into his eyes.

"No promises," said the minister decidedly. "And beware, Mr. Boyce, how you make free with my name again. If

you mention this matter to the deacons, they will, of course, speak to me about it, and I shall know exactly what you have said to them. Meantime, I will be frank with you. I do not myself consider that you are qualified to teach, and unless I find afterwards that I have very grievously misjudged you, I am afraid I shall be compelled to withhold my approval."

Just then a letter was brought in. It was addressed in a flowing, boyish hand, and bore the St. Mary's postmark. Mr. Miller's eyes brightened, and he caught at it eagerly. Boyce, seeing that he was dismissed, rose stiffly from his chair, smoothed the nap of his hat with his right elbow, and glided out, his heart beating with resentment.

The minister bade him farewell, and sat down to enjoy his letter and his *Spectator*, unconscious of the malignant gleam

which was shot at him by his departing visitor. What did a Boyce matter to him —a Boyce more or less in his congregation? Well, he was the pastor of Boyce's soul; and Boyce's soul was ostensibly as valuable as anyone else's. What — as valuable as his boy's? his Guy's? Then he gave a chuckle of rather profane amusement, and, throwing himself back in his chair, broke the seal of his envelope.

CHAPTER II.

FRIENDS IN COUNCIL.

A PLACID city, venerable with ancient halls, stately with many a dome and spire, shaded by immemorial trees; a comely city, girded by green pastures and a network of bubbling streams, sparkling in the sunlight and flashing bluely beneath a tender sky; a classic city, rich in memories of great ones past and present—kings, cardinals, and bishops, statesmen, poets, and mighty scholars, pious founders, valiant knights, even an abbess or two; a city breathing thought, and nourished on the reveries of the past; in which an

atmosphere of mediæval ecclesiasticism mingles with zephyrs from the Attic plains, and the modern spirit, insolent and importunate in its youthful vigour, has to fight the uphill fight of a *parvenu* who claims a place amid patricians. To call St. Mary's a 'charming' city would sound meaningless, vulgar, and poor; a clear proof this, however, of the degeneracy of language; for if 'charming' means exercising a charm, a spell, an influence alike subtle, permanent, and humanizing, then is it the very word we want. Who, that has ever been there, has not experienced its charm—be he the gray-haired president or dean who has spent a lifetime in its cloistered peace, or the tourist, whether from London or New York, who wanders gaping, with his head now thrown back, now poring over the guide-book in his hand, for a few hours among its crumbling

colleges? 'Tis not for me to answer. England has felt its charm. Gauge England as she is to-day—the result of your estimate is not important, whatever it may be. But what would England be had St. Mary's never existed? Different, surely; and, as surely, less good, less noble, less great than she actually is.

But St. Mary's is not always in a contemplative mood; nay, she is not always quiet. Listen! What is that strange, booming roar—distant, and yet seeming to fill the air? It is a sound of life—throbbing, joyous, strong young life—and it comes from I know not how many hundreds of strong young throats, as though to roar were bliss. It is a sound of exultation, of victory. Again and again it rises, sinking and swelling with the breeze, and making the air vibrate as with the pulsations of some great steam-vessel.

Turn down this street, passing Cardinal College on the left, and Brecknock on the right; gain the bridge, and then look at the scene before you. On come the boats, cleaving the blue water which eddies away in wide sweeps from the advancing prows; handkerchiefs and parasols flutter furiously upon the roofs of the painted barges; a motley throng, dappled with blazers of blue, white, scarlet, purple and green, bare-kneed and flannel-capped, precipitates itself tumultuously along the towpath, whooping, cheering, roaring, a very whirlwind of vociferation. Up fly caps in clouds, and then over the stream venture a fleet of frightfully overloaded punts—for the great event is achieved. In less than a quarter of an hour the whole city knows that Sandford has bumped Cardinal, and is now at the head of the river.

Two undergraduates, soberly though

somewhat modishly attired in the tweeds of conventional life, descend from the barge where they have been witnessing the aquatic fray, and, laughing merrily, cross the river to the towpath side for a stroll through the Berkshire meadows. They are slim-built lads, neither of them much over the middle height; they are, too, not without a superficial resemblance to each other, in spite of the contrast between the crisp, warm-tinted chestnut hair and deep-blue eyes of the one, and the close yellow curls and dark-gray iris of his companion, for both have delicately-moulded noses, short upper lips, the clear complexion of consummate health, and the elastic step of youth. But there the likeness ends. Their expressions in repose are wholly different. Cecil Urquhart, the son of a physician lately settled in London, after a residence of some years at Heather-

combe, in Westlandshire, is an embodiment of the *esprit moqueur*, which twinkles in his gray eyes, and plays harmlessly enough about his mouth. An irreverent youth, I fear, regarding the majority of mankind with the naïvest and most enchanting scorn, disposing of the gravities of life with a merry jeer or quip, and laughing away misfortunes, doubts, troubles, and discontents as you brush away the cobwebs across a garden-path.

It was no doubt this happy, pagan, faun-like disposition which constituted his attraction for Guy Miller, whose views of life were tinged with seriousness, and who had an unfortunate knack of pondering and musing where Cecil would have laughed and forgotten. Guy knew this, and often told himself that Cecil was the very antidote he wanted, in which, no doubt, he was right enough ; but it is by

no means so sure that Cecil, really devoted as he was to Guy, ever gave him grounds for the belief that the effects of their polarity were reciprocal. And it was this radical difference between the natures of the two youths which, reflected in the face of each, constituted the chief cause of their real dissimilarity.

"Well, that was a splendid race, anyhow," said Guy, as he lighted a cigarette. "Cardinal put on a fine spurt at the bend, but one could see that Sandford was safe to have them. Muriel and Philippa haven't done badly, either. What a row there'll be at Sandford to-night! Can't you fancy those fellows?"

"Rather," replied Cecil with a smile. "I went to a bump-supper last Torpids at Philippa, and the memory of it bids fair to continue fresh for years. Still, it was an experience."

"Which wasn't bought for nothing, if I remember rightly?" rejoined Guy, laughing.

"True," said Cecil. "I ran into the arms of a benevolent proctor just as I was within a stone's-throw of the gate, and the embrace cost me half-a-sovereign. I often wonder whether those fellows really enjoy prowling about the streets at night, spying right and left. I wouldn't do it for a trifle."

"Lucky for them," remarked Guy, as he lifted his straw hat, and let the wind whistle merrily through his red-brown mop of short hair. "Some of them aren't so bad, though; they've none of them ever proctorized me, so I owe the breed a good word, after all."

"I suppose you never saw Tommy of Evangelist's calmly standing outside his own church, note-book in hand, taking down the names of all the fellows as they

came out?" returned Cecil. "They say he made a terrific bag on one occasion—sportive creature."

"Tommy isn't half a bad fellow, though, at bottom," said Guy. "And he's certainly a lenient examiner."

"Well, I've no objection," said Cecil lightly. "Perhaps I don't sufficiently appreciate donnish virtues—I always think what a very much more virtuous set of men they'd be if they weren't dons. As for Tommy, he looks like a stick of black sealing-wax, and he acts according to his nature. I've no doubt he'd do better if he knew how."

"I think they'd do better if they weren't parsons," replied Guy. "I don't very much believe in clerical dons—particularly in those fellows who go in for orders for the sake of getting some fat professorship that they can't hold as laymen. It

strikes me there must be something wrong somewhere for such an abuse to be possible."

"Yes; *isn't* that a joke?" responded Cecil gleefully. "To my mind it's one of the most humorous things out. And then the demureness of the beggars—oh, it's a wonderful comedy! I love to see their pious airs, and the ineffable complacency of their smug faces. They are the very embodiments, in my eye, of Official Christianity—a sort of Christianity that is officially orthodox, officially credulous, officially sanctified, officially regenerate, but which very diplomatically holds its tongue, and is careful never to overstep the precise limits of its official opinions, lest its utterances should fail to harmonize with its professions."

"What a very ridiculous person you are, Cecil," said Guy, drawing down the corners

of his mouth in an amused smile. "I don't think I meant to imply quite all that. What are you, by the way? What do you call yourself?"

"My friends call me Cecil Urquhart," began Cecil modestly; "but as I have never yet had occasion to address myself——"

"Don't be absurd," retorted Guy, flinging away his cigarette. "You know what I mean. What's your 'platform' in these matters? Do you believe in anything, or are you an Agnostic?"

"Now, that question opens up a very curious problem," said Cecil meditatively. "Let us clear the way by propounding another. What is a mule—is it a horse or an ass?"

"Popular prejudice runs in favour of its being a cross between the two," answered Guy.

"And is that all you can tell me?" rejoined Cecil. "Then I'm afraid I can't give you a very satisfactory account of myself. My father is a confirmed Agnostic, and my mother is a Christian. Query: As the offspring of this curiously assorted couple, what am I?"

"A mule, evidently," said Guy. "But, as a mule, have you no opinions of your own?"

"Of course I've opinions," replied Cecil; "very strong opinions, too, I can tell you. But, then, my opinions are not the result of any reasoning process on my part—consciously, at any rate; they are a part of myself, just like my nose. I can't help having a nose, and I can't help its shape; neither can I help having opinions, or the sort of opinions they are."

"Go on, pray," urged Guy satirically.

"Well," continued Cecil, with a gravity

that sat very whimsically upon him, "my chief opinion is one that includes a vast number of others; namely, that most of the opinions held upon most of the subjects that people wrangle about are all rot. Half the reviews and magazines one reads are full of articles about the origin of the universe, the origin and destiny of man, the existence or non-existence of a God, and suchlike matters—even descending to discuss the inspiration of certain ancient documents. One would think people's very lives depended upon their discovering the answer to these conundrums. Well, then, I think to myself: Here I am; I am composed, to the best of my belief, of as many ingredients as a pudding, called by high-flown chemical names; and I owe my existence to the action of certain cosmic forces, over which I have no more power than that buttercup

has. All I know is that I am the latest outgrowth of the generations that went before me; what's to become of me in the dim future, I cannot tell; but I have a sort of spontaneous conviction, also a part of my nature, *that it's all right.* Even if it weren't, how could we help it? But I believe that everything *is* all right—that, in fact, nothing *could* be different from what it is; and I'm perfectly happy in regarding myself as a passive product of the universe and the ages—just as a bud is a passive product of the plant. What's the odds, after all? You can never get any further than that with all your questionings; and I therefore consider that my philosophy is as good a one as there can be under the conditions of our existence."

"What deplorably bad logicians all you optimists are, Cecil," remarked Guy, after

a pause. "But I'm not going to argue with you. It wouldn't be any use. Of course *I* consider the investigation of all these questions most profoundly interesting — painfully so, sometimes. Even the dispute about inspiration, now——"

"Oh, my dear Guy, don't begin upon that, if you love me!" cried Cecil with humorous energy. "Was there ever such a waste of time, brain-power, and scholarship as men devote to that most unpractical of all discussions? Here have you been attending I don't know how many lectures of old Botheram's during the last few weeks on 'The Inspiration of the Psalter.' You fellows are not content with poring over this collection of national ballads, hymns, and war-songs till you're half blind, but must needs begin to worry each other by asking, Are they inspired? Why, that's not the question

at all. The true question is, Are they *inspiring?* Did they inspire the Jews to deeds of heroism, or to elevated ideals? Do they inspire the people who read them nowadays? If they do, what matters it through what agency they were composed? If they don't, what does their own inspiration amount to? You might as well insist upon tracing the pedigree of a sheep before you eat the leg of mutton it has been doomed to sacrifice for your benefit. If the mutton is tender and nourishing, eat it and be thankful; what is its ancestry to you? But no, people must have something to wrangle about; and they are stupid enough to waste their labour in all sorts of fruitless conjectures and inventions, instead of enjoying the things they possess already."

"And you seriously mean to say that

you have no difficulties whatever?" asked Guy, half envyingly.

"Well, I won't go quite so far as that," replied Cecil with mock gravity. "Life has its difficulties, even for me. For instance, I experienced a certain difficulty when I went up for Smalls; but this I happily overcame. Then I often have a difficulty in reconciling my landlady's weekly bills with the principles of strict commercial morality; that, however, I hope to avoid in future, as I am coming back to live in college. Thirdly, I sometimes have a difficulty in meeting my—er—other financial engagements; and with these difficulties pressing upon me without any seeking on my own part, why in the name of common-sense should I go and look for any more?"

"But I don't go and look for them," said Guy; "I only can't shut my eyes

to them. And they do worry me a little. They all hinge more or less upon religion; and that, you know——"

"Guy, listen to me," interrupted his Mentor with fine impressiveness. "I perceive you are on the brink of danger. Be warned by the dreadful example of my grandmother. Religion drove her mad! It's a fact, I do assure you. My father says that it permeated her entire system to such a degree that at last it poisoned her blood, so that she eventually died in a private lunatic asylum. A positive case of death from religious blood-poisoning! A scalded dog dreads cold water—I'm safe enough. But I'd be mortal sorry to see you going in the same direction, or anybody else I cared about," added the lad, with almost pathetic earnestness.

Guy opened his blue eyes in such frank

amazement at this astounding story that Cecil exploded in a fit of laughter. Then he went on :

"I'm not joking, truly. I never saw my grandmother, I'm glad to say ; but I believe she was a terrible old person. Led my unfortunate mother a deuce of a life when she was a girl, and virtually drove my uncle off to America. However, I don't want to be hard upon her," said Cecil, with winning candour, "because, you see, she did die eventually, and left us a pot of money. All I want is that you should take warning by her fate, and not go worrying your head about things that don't matter to anybody, and which nobody can know anything whatever about."

Guy laughed, looked doubtful, then relapsed into silence. They walked on a few hundred yards further, enjoying the fresh breeze, and watching the sun as it

sank slowly towards the horizon amid a blaze of mellow light. At last Miller said:

"After all, you know, Cecil, your opinions, as you call them, are not really opinions at all. They are simply instincts."

"I shouldn't wonder a bit," acknowledged young Urquhart readily. "Why not instincts? Instincts are a truer guide than opinions half the time. Why, the whole animal creation gets its living by means of instincts, and dispenses with the use of reason altogether. Oh, that theology," he broke out, "how I do hate it! It repels me at every turn. How fellows can go in for it as they do here beats me altogether. Fancy poring over 'The Fathers'—a pack of narrow-minded, superstitious old fossils—and worrying over the decisions of their stupid Councils, for the love of it! I'd as soon spend my time grubbing about in a charnel-house

of old bones. Indeed, I often think that I was born three thousand years or so too late. My ideal of existence is the heroic age of the Greeks—a pure nature-life, a life passed in the very morning of the world, when thought and habit were as fresh as the breezes of the Peloponnesus, when the air was uncontaminated by anything worse than the violets on the slopes of Ida, and the only religion was the worship of Ideal Beauty. Just look at the world now—blackened with factory-smoke, noisy with empty wranglings, full of the very ugliest and most uninteresting people imaginable—how *could* the sylvan deities breathe such an atmosphere? No wonder they have all disappeared. And when we think——"

"Come, old chap, we shall be late for hall at this rate," interrupted Guy, laugh-

ing, as he passed his arm through Cecil's. "Suppose we turn."

"Bother hall!" exclaimed Cecil, suddenly brought down from the clouds. "There's lots of time; why, what are you thinking of? It's only half-past five. Let's go on as far as the next lock. Don't you agree with me that the world has hideously degenerated since what you call, I suppose, the semi-historic ages? Is it any better for the mass of artificialities that men have invented? Do you really consider all our canting civilization an *improvement* upon the fresh, free life of ancient Greece? You called me an optimist just now. I'm an optimist just so far as I make the best of things; just so far as I'm able to shake myself free of all your nineteenth-century superstitions—religious, philosophical, and social—but no further; as regards them, I'm a pessimist, because

I believe them all wrong, all bad. Therefore I ignore them as far as possible, and lead my own life, follow my own instincts, and act upon the belief that all your theologians, and philosophers, and quacks generally, haven't half the wisdom of that lark singing up there, senseless automaton as they may consider it."

"Well, but you said just now that you believed everything was 'all right,' and that the universe *couldn't* be different from what it is," said Guy. "Seems to me that your opinions don't quite hang together—do they?"

"I was speaking — cosmically," replied Cecil. "The cosmic forces work beneficently enough, and, as the laws of nature are what they are, the phenomena they produce are absolutely unavoidable. Of course they're not responsible for the vagaries of human beings," said the young

philosopher with fine disdain. "One can spoil anything, if only one is perverse enough. What is it that somebody says? 'Men were created upright, but they have sought out many inventions.' That's the truest word ever spoken. Isn't it borne out by all we know of history? Compare Rome under Numa Pompilius with Rome under the Cæsars, or the mediæval Popes. You might as well compare the breezes on the top of that hill there with the atmosphere of Lucretia Borgia's dressing-room — reeking with patchouli, profligacy, and crime. Compare the religion of Æneas with the horrors of your Calvinism — pure devil-worship, to my thinking—or the doctrine of transubstantiation, to take a special example. Compare the chicaneries of modern law-practice, again, with the rough-and-ready justice of the days when lawyers hadn't

been invented. I dare say it's all inevitable—given the increase of population, the accumulation of wealth, and such-like potent factors. I only say the change is for the worse, and not for the better; the world is perfect, but people won't let it alone; and I am, as I said before, only an optimist in so far as I accept this inevitable with a laugh and a shrug, feeling very sorry that my fellow-creatures persist in worrying their heads about matters that to me are perfectly simple, and spoiling the world by their inveterate restlessness, curiosity, and greed of gain."

"Well, do you know, I rather agree with you," said Guy in a dreamy tone, after a pause. "Anyhow, I expect the world *was* a purer and more natural sort of place in the golden age of Greece, say, than it is to-day. But for all that, we're living in it as it is to-day, and can't live

outside it, try how we may. We find ourselves in a certain environment, and to that environment we must adapt ourselves, unless we're to go to the wall. And, besides, there's another view to be taken into consideration, though you may not attach much weight to it. But we mustn't lose sight of what Tennyson says :

"'Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns.'

Childhood is purer than manhood—granted ; happier too, may be ; but not so great. It's no use expecting the human race to remain stationary, for it's impossible it should. Its brain must grow, its strength must increase, its experience must widen and deepen ; and in this process of development there is and must

be *purpose*. Doesn't it strike you so, too?"

Cecil pursed up his lips doubtfully, wrinkled his forehead, and then laughed.

"Oh yes," he said, in his airy manner. "I'm not going to deny all that. What would be the good? You can't prove there isn't, any more than you can prove there is. To me, the course of the world's history looks purposeless enough, I own—almost a chaos, in fact; or, if you insist upon your 'purpose,' it's either a very obscure one or one of questionable success. There! that's enough. Now let's talk about something else. What's this affair at the Jacobses' to-night?"

"The usual squash, I suppose," returned Guy. "They've a dinner on at seven, and as they can't possibly dine as many people as there are square inches to the drawing-room floor, they've asked a lot

more in afterwards—ourselves included—in order to ensure everybody being wedged quite tight. Mrs. Jacobs thinks her rooms empty if anyone can move his elbows without assaulting his next neighbour."

"And what are we supposed to do when we get there?" asked Cecil.

"Support life as best we can," said Guy, laughing; "that'll be our first duty—to exemplify in our own *corpora vilia* Darwin's theory of the universal struggle for existence. Secondly, to try and look as if we liked it. Thirdly, to plunge, at an instant's notice, into rational and interesting conversation with one person after another whom we've never set eyes on before, whose name we can't hear, and about whose tastes, acquirements, antecedents, and abode we know absolutely nothing at all. It may be an old lady, for instance; possibly the learned wife

of some don—a sort of Mrs. Blimber, say —or possibly a visitor of two days' standing, who goes wandering all through the streets and asking which is the University. It may be a girl from Martineau Hall, who will expect you to talk to her of cosines and tangents; or an *ingénue* who doesn't go in for erudition, but gushes about lawn-tennis, water-picnics, afternoon-teas, or the remarkable number of concerts that are going on this term. And woe betide you if you make a mistake—that's all! You'll be looked down upon for the rest of your natural life."

"Delightful prospect!" laughed Cecil. "Why, Guy, I declare you're developing quite a talent for satire; you must have caught it from me, I expect. I scarcely know the Jacobses at all, by the way, having only called once. What are they like?"

"The most oddly-matched pair I have ever come across," said Guy emphatically. "The old man thinks and talks of nothing but Accadian chronology, cuneiform inscriptions, the seat of the Aryans, and all that sort of thing—you know the style; forgets to eat his dinner at the proper time, thinks it's eleven o'clock in the morning when it's five in the afternoon, and takes no interest in any politics later than about 2500 B.C. Even that he considers almost indecorously modern. His wife, who's about five-and-twenty years younger than he is, cares as much for the Accadians as she does for the extinct inhabitants of the moon, preferring horse-exercise and the society of undergrads to all the hieroglyphics ever invented, and being desperately addicted to regular and—say, copious—meals. The doctor's vagaries drive her half dis-

tracted sometimes, and then she screams; while the poor old doctor gazes vacantly at her, wondering what the deuce all the row's about, and only dimly conscious that somehow the fault is his. You know she's a German? Yes, and not a bad sort of woman by any means; but about as much fitted to be the wife of old Jacobs as to be Professor of Accadian herself. Why in the world two such people ever married each other is one of the mysteries that will probably never be solved," concluded Guy impressively; "I don't know a couple more exquisitely adapted by nature to plague one another than those two, and yet, somehow, they would do it."

"Let us take warning by their terrible fate, and avoid the sex altogether, my dear Guy," suggested Cecil, in the comfortable tone of one who is still ensconced in the safe anchorage of indifference.

"These poor old fellows—why, I think some of them are scarcely responsible for their actions, you know. But they serve as examples to others, so they're of some use, even when they have enslaved themselves. Guy, swear to me—for you're such a donkey, you know, I feel myself more than half responsible for you—swear you'll never go and make a fool of yourself in that way!"

"Never fear," said Guy, with an easy laugh. "I'm as safe as you are, every bit. What more do I want than I have—or you, either?"

Their eyes met, for an instant, in a quick, comprehending glance, and then, both laughing in happy *insouciance*, they slackened their pace by common consent, while Guy pulled out his watch. The sun had set some time, and great purple clouds were rolling up from the horizon

and overspreading the sky, while the wind blew chilly and fresh. Evening had descended upon them, and it was time to turn. Back they strolled through the scented meadows, the young grass springing soft beneath their feet, and the river rippling tranquilly along in the twilight. Soon afterwards they were threading the city streets in the direction of Muriel College.

CHAPTER III.

'SOCIETY' IN SOUTHAM GARDENS.

By nine o'clock that evening Mrs. Jacobs's drawing-room in Southam Gardens was certainly very full. The dinner-party had consisted of about a dozen people—the President of Evangelist's and his wife, the Provost of Muriel, the Professor of Eleemosynary Divinity, the Reader in Prehistoric Heraldry, and the Robinsonian Lecturer on the Hagiographa being the most eminent of the guests, to whose numbers had now been added a large influx of less distinguished persons, chiefly ladies and undergraduates. The

arrivals had nearly all taken place, and Mrs. Jacobs, a tall, energetic, bustling matron, loud of voice and effusive in deportment, was talking, in high-pitched tones, to three people at once. The Babel of tongues was deafening. About forty persons were present, and there were exactly eighteen seats available, allowing three to each of the two sofas; everybody was talking to somebody else, and the rank-and-file were wedged together in a compact mass, in which it was almost impossible to move an elbow. Dr. Jacobs, a short, pale, elderly man, with gray beard and mild, absent-looking blue eyes, stood near the fireplace, discussing his latest theory respecting the great Accadian emigration, *circa* 2900 B.C., with the Provost of Muriel; while the Reader in Prehistoric Heraldry, having been suddenly presented to an expansive lady

in red velvet and a handsome front, found himself reduced to the humiliating, not to say embarrassing, necessity of explaining to her the exact difference between Rugby and Association football. The lady was ignorant, but profoundly interested; the gentleman was almost equally ignorant, and profoundly *un*interested; but if a lady persists in catechizing you upon a matter about which you know little and care less, what are you to do? for any attempt to interest her in *your* special subject, be it prehistoric heraldry or the totemism of the Andaman Islanders, would be not only useless, but impolite. Taking, however, a wide survey of the topics under discussion, it would be found that they were somewhat limited, consisting, for the most part, of the desirability of St. Mary's as a place of residence, the excellence of the recent

concerts, the prospects of the next football match, and the success of Sandford at the boats; the last-named occupying, as the event of the day, the position of honour.

"Oh, so you're at Muriel," said a wide-awake-looking young lady in conversation with a young gentleman, about her own age, standing in front of her. That is, she shouted it, though scarcely conscious of the fact; for, had she spoken in her natural tones, she would have been quite inaudible. "Well, your college did rather well to-day. Were you rowing?"

"No," replied the undergraduate; and immediately fell five degrees in the young lady's estimation. "I don't go in much for aquatics, beyond pulling myself up the river sometimes on a warm afternoon, and then lying under the trees with a book."

"Really!" exclaimed the girl with undis-

guised scorn. "Well, I don't think you're worthy of the University. Of course you play football? Are you in the team next Thursday?"

"No, I'm not; and I don't play football," replied the lad bluntly, a gleam of amusement in his eyes.

"Then what's the use of you? What have come up here for?" retorted the young lady.

"Perhaps I'm not of any particular use," said the other; "but I believe I was sent to the University to read."

"Oh, to read!" repeated the girl impatiently; "I suppose that's taken for granted. But what do you do with yourself when you're not reading?"

"Anything I happen to feel inclined to," replied the undergraduate—not discourteously, but with marked reserve. "And you—have you lived here long?"

"Long enough to see that there are a good many people who have no business in the place at all!" answered the girl with even greater pertness. "Some of the undergraduates are nice enough, and give agreeable tea-parties in their rooms; but I think that an uglier set of young men I have never met with. How is it they are all so ugly, I wonder?"

"How, indeed?" was the gravely sympathetic rejoinder.

"You don't seem to have much conversation," remarked the young lady, somewhat disconcerted at not receiving the embarrassed protest she expected as no more than due to her wit. "Are you a freshman? I suppose you haven't been up long. Have you any politics? What side are you on?"

"I don't pay very much attention to

politics," replied the youth; "but my sympathies and convictions are decidedly Unionist."

"The first part of your answer explains the second, evidently," commented his fair critic brusquely. "If you'd thought about the matter at all, you'd be a Home Ruler. But, of course, you've never read anything on the other side of the question—people of your sort never do."

"That's an unlucky shot," said the other. "I once read nothing but the *Daily News* for three months, and I found it driving me into such rampant Toryism that I had to give it up in self-defence."

"I suppose you think that's clever," retorted his amiable opponent, somewhat taken aback. "What are you 'in for,' as they say here?"

"I'm reading history at present; but——"

"And how soon do you intend to set about writing a history of the universe?"

The tone in which this question was put was so insufferably impudent that the young gentleman addressed made no reply. It had, however, reached the ears of a lady standing near, who, turning round, said in earnest tones:

"A history of the universe? What a wonderful idea! Pray, Miss Heckler, how should you define 'the universe'?"

She was a delightful contrast to Miss Heckler, whatever else she might be. Her voice was soft and low, her eyes had a far-off look in them, she had a plentiful supply of glittering golden hair, and she wore a clinging robe of pale sage-green. Miss Heckler immediately prepared to transfer her broadsides to the new-comer.

"I'm not good at conundrums, Miss

Crewe," she said, with a short laugh. "Ask Dr. Jacobs there — they're more in his way than mine. And the inquiry is so characteristically chimerical, that he is safe to become absorbed in it at once."

Then Miss Crewe very gently but very unmistakably turned her back upon Miss Heckler, and addressed herself to the undergraduate.

"Tell me," she said, in the intense manner habitual to her, "how would *you* define the universe?"

"Really, Miss Crewe," he replied with a bright, pleasant smile, "you are putting too great a strain upon my powers altogether. Such a subject must be susceptible of numberless definitions, almost as many as the definers. How do *you* conceive of the universe, may I ask?"

"I conceive of it," replied Miss Crewe,

waving her hands gently up and down, with her eyes apparently fixed upon some spot in the neighbourhood of Alpha Centauri, or thereabouts—"I conceive of it as an assemblage of *points of force;* the totality of such points, I mean. Although, I suppose—indeed, I am sure—that definitions, equally apt, could be framed in quite other terms—the terms of mathematics, for instance. I have always thought, do you know, that one of the most absorbing studies must be the interdependence and equilibrium of worlds. The conception of it bursts upon me, so to speak, at odd times—when I am half asleep at night, or in church, or sometimes when I'm on the river—and seems to crush the very sense of identity out of me, leaving me only semi-conscious of myself. Don't you know what it is to feel one's inner springs

connected in some mysterious way with the pulsating mechanics of the spheres, so that it is impossible to doubt that our own nervous system is the propylæum to a fuller, and finer, and more permanent region of susceptibilities?"

Thus, rapt and gently fluent, Hypatia Crewe. The bewildered lad hesitated a moment, and then, laughing frankly, said:

"I'm afraid you soar far above my reach. I can't quite attain such transcendental heights. Still," he added with a bright smile, "I like talking to you better than to Miss Heckler. Does she belong to the University, I wonder? I've never met anybody quite like her before."

Hypatia paused—a favourite trick of hers in conversation.

"Miss Heckler is a very difficult per-

son to appreciate," she said at last. "No, she is not connected with the University. They've only come here quite lately. Her people have something to do with Birmingham — screws, I fancy. Surely you did not take her for a student from Martineau Hall?"

"Oh dear no," was the prompt reply. "She rather puzzled me, that's all. Have you seen the company that are performing at the theatre just now? I'm told they're unusually good."

"No—no, indeed," replied Hypatia, a pensive look coming over her face as she shook her head gently. "I have thought once or twice lately that perhaps I shall never enter a theatre any more."

"Really?" said the lad, surprised. "I should have thought you'd have enjoyed good acting, of all things. Do you mean that you object to the theatre on principle?"

Again the pause — which, if occasionally disconcerting, did much to impart a certain impressiveness to the slow sentences which followed.

"Far from it," she said at last, in a tone of the deepest seriousness. "But last time I was in London I saw a performance the effects of which still remain with me—will remain with me, I sometimes think, for ever. The pathos, the tenderness——"

"Irving, I suppose?" suggested the youth, smiling. "Or Beerbohm Tree—Wilson Barrett——"

"No, no, indeed!" replied Hypatia, with emotion. "It was Mr. Toole, in the part of 'Caleb Plummer.' I cannot describe his acting. I only know that I sat the whole time blinded with tears, and that it has been my dream ever since that Mr. Toole might be my guardian angel throughout life."

"I thought Toole was a comic actor," replied the other, stifling a most agonizing desire to laugh outright.

"I saw nothing comic in him," said Hypatia. "The very idea of such a word in connection with such a personality as his almost savours of profanity. Indeed, I regard all recognitions of what is called 'humour' as arising entirely from an inability to comprehend the true meaning of what we see. To me, the universe is full of two things—wonder and pathos; and the pathos consists in the fact that we *do* wonder, that there is so much we cannot grasp, or, at any rate, have not succeeded in grasping hitherto. And we probably never shall, in this life, because all we can see is phenomenal merely—because the hidden realities, the hypostatic quiddity of the *Ding an sich*, are invisible to us. Have you ever studied the higher mathematics?"

"I've been dabbling in fluxions a little," was the cautious answer.

Again Hypatia paused; but this time it was because she suddenly became alive to the fact that she did not know whom she was talking to.

"Who can it be?" she thought to herself. "Surely I have met him before." Then she rapidly took an inventory of his features, in her own romantic fashion. "Thick, wavy, copper-coloured hair, springing up from a broad, perpendicular forehead—deep, flower-like blue eyes—red lips, and a delicate, thoughtful nose—who is he? or, rather, what is the reality underlying this exceedingly attractive phenomenon?" So at last she said, with a somewhat embarrassed smile:

"Do excuse me. I know I have seen you elsewhere, but really at the moment——"

"I am Guy Miller, of Muriel," he replied, laughing. "I had no idea that I had the advantage of you. We met first at St. Ambrose, I think, last term. But you were saying——"

"Thank you so much!" said Hypatia, greatly relieved. "Of course, I remember you now. Yes—what were we saying? Oh, fluxions! Now, do you know, that is most remarkable. It is one of my beliefs that in fluxions is to be found the secret of all science, all religions, all ethical and transcendental systems in the world. We should treat all these subjects as the method of fluxions teaches us to treat curves. Nature never works in straight lines, and, therefore, can never be interpreted by an adherence to fixed rules. One of my favourite guides — a man whom I have once or twice thought must have been an avatar of Pythagoras—

used to say that 'our only hope of solving any important problem lies in remembering that whatever a man can see or know can only be an element of the Truth, the straight line which both is and is not in the curve; that man is being set to work out fluxions of the True Right, which, when worked out, are to be used—the straight line vanishing that we may retain it in its effect.' So you see that we have here, in mathematics, a key to everything; and by using it, though we may never penetrate the deepest arcana of the universe, never arrive at the end of our road, we shall, at any rate, be preserved from going wrong."

"That sounds very wonderful," said Guy, as Hypatia, with calm, fervid eyes, gazed at him like an inspired prophetess. "A key to everything—in fluxions!" he repeated. "It sounds like a paradox."

"There is no Truth *but* in paradox," said Hypatia, with a gesture as distinctly sage-green as the dress she wore. "Only that can be the right opinion which is the union of opposites. Truth is the reconciliation of incompatibles by the fusion of their several elements, the blending of their deepest antagonisms; and that is paradox, pure and simple."

"A hard saying," remarked poor Guy, who began to think almost regretfully of Miss Heckler.

"Only because it is new to you," returned Hypatia, with an indulgent smile. "And yet, if you think a moment, you will see that even the exact sciences themselves are full of paradox. If they were not, they would not be true. It is true that the three angles of every triangle are together equal to two right angles; but it is also true that no such thing as a perfect right

angle exists in nature. Plane geometry deals with superficies; yet Professor Clifford shows us that a 'surface' is indefinable — that it actually eludes our touch, and exists only in our imaginations. Two parallel lines will never meet; but how can we rest in that as an ultimate truth when an infinite curve may go on for ever getting nearer and nearer to a straight line and yet never reach it?"

"But at this rate," urged Guy, "it seems to me that there is really no difference between the true and the false."

"Ah, how can we tell?" sighed Hypatia, her eyes again wandering in the direction of Alpha Centauri. "I do believe, though, that the false is often the best road to a discovery of the true." Then she paused a moment, and glanced at Guy inquiringly. "Perhaps we have both been getting a little out of our depths," she said, with a

slight sigh. "Tell me something about yourself. How long have you been at Muriel?"

"Just two years," said Guy, breathing common air again.

"And haven't I often seen you walking with Mr. Urquhart?" pursued Miss Crewe.

"Nothing is more likely," replied Guy, smiling; "we are pretty generally together. Do you know him, may I ask?"

"No—that is, I don't think I have ever spoken to him," said Miss Crewe; "but I have heard a good deal about him, and I once met his father, the doctor. Dr. Urquhart is one of those men, you know," she continued, sinking her voice as low as the surrounding clamour would permit, "who shut their eyes and then say that neither they nor anybody else can see. They mistake the phenomenal for the real, the eidolon for the hypostasis. Does your

friend take after his father in that respect?"

"Vat are you talking about?" suddenly said the somewhat strident voice of Mrs. Jacobs at Hypatia's elbow. "Urquhart—who is zen Urquhart? *Ach!* yes, I know him—he is here to-night, even—zat grinning little pagan ve met at Professor Grübenheimer's one afternoon. Vat, he is nice, say you? *Gott!* he may be; but I like not ze yong men who laugh at everysing. How! He is your friend? Well, you will forgive me, my dear Mr. Miller, I knew it not. Oh, I dare say I am quite mistaken in him. One cannot judge of a stranger—no, no; you are entirely right. Have you seen my husband zis evening, Miss Crewe? Comm, zen, do me a favour. He vill talk of nossing but his cuneiforms and his emigrations—he drive me mad viz his emigrations, and

most ozer people, too. Comm and tell him about ze scandals, ze fashions, ze politic, anysing—and make zat he talk like a r-r-reasonable being. See, he is just going up to Mr. Ramsbottom. *Nein, nein! das thu'st du nicht!* Comm, my dear Miss Crewe, and see, if he dares to say anysing to you about Nimrod or Nebuchadnezzar——"

So Miss Crewe was led off, and deposited next to Dr. Jacobs, in order to regale him with any tittle-tattle that would wean his mind from B.C. 2900, while Mrs. Jacobs returned to Guy, bent on providing him, too, with a congenial interlocutor. For a moment she was at a loss, then a happy thought struck her.

"Your poppa is clairgyman, *nicht?*" she said. "*Ach, ja!* I remember it well. Now I vill introduce you to a friend of mine, who is also clairgyman. Mr. Dul-

cimer! Let me introduce Mr. Guy Miller, of Muriel—ze Reverend Francis Dulcimer. Now you may talk togezzer!" and then away she went.

Guy found himself standing in front of a correct-looking young divine, with a pale, washed-out complexion, light hair, mild eyes, and tolerably regular features. The two bowed, and then there ensued a pause of terrible embarrassment. Both wanted to speak, but neither had the faintest notion what to say. Guy cudgelled his brains in vain. The young parson put on an expression of amiable inquiry. Guy inwardly chafed at his own stupidity, and then began wondering what Mr. Dulcimer would think of him if he opened the conversation by a reference to the morality of fluxions.

It was clear, however, that the spell must be broken somehow, so he braced

himself for a final effort, in defiance of all considerations of common-sense.

"Mrs. Jacobs said—you are a clergyman, I believe?" was the brilliant result of his long struggle.

"Yes, I am," said Mr. Dulcimer mildly. "There are plenty of us in St. Mary's—aren't there?"

This was not a very suggestive rejoinder, but it was as good as the question deserved.

Guy felt more nonplussed than ever.

"Yes, that is true," he said, in desperate hopes of leading up to something. "Indeed, considering how small St. Mary's is, I have often wondered how there can be work enough for so many."

"Oh, there is plenty to do," replied Mr. Dulcimer, in a soft, musical voice. "Indeed, I find the days too short, if anything."

"Really!" said Guy. "You refer to—coaching, I suppose?"

"No, I am not a coach," answered the young clergyman with a smile. "But what with services and visiting, you know, and things of that sort——"

"Oh, pastoral work! I see," said Guy. "Are there many poor in your parish?"

An expression of mingled perplexity and amusement flitted over Mr. Dulcimer's features.

"I'm afraid I don't know," he said simply. "What I mean is—well, paying visits, you know. Of course one must see one's friends, especially when they are useful in church matters. To-day, for instance, I was at three five o'clock teas; then I am helping in two concerts that are coming off next week, and that means almost continuous practising at one house or another; besides which, as chaplain at St. Ambrose,

I have two college services a day; and then I'm private chaplain to Sir Woodpecker Tapping, whose wife is *fanatica* for good services, and insists that everything on Sunday shall go without a hitch. So you see," he concluded with a smile, "that there *are* hard-working clergymen, even in St. Mary's."

Guy stared, coloured, and then bit his lip to keep in a laugh.

"You certainly do seem busy," he remarked quietly. "Are all your clerical friends as busy as you are, I wonder?"

"My dear Sir," said Mr. Dulcimer confidentially, "I should not like to say. The fact is, that there are some men here who have no business in the Church at all. Indeed, between ourselves, I find no small difficulty in deciding whom it is proper to associate with. As a layman, I dare say you scarcely realize this. But if you exer-

cise a little observation you will notice that some are no more than college-grinders, while others are more like itinerant professional lecturers—persons who have no more idea what a Church service ought to be like than if they had been born deaf, and whose only idea seems to be to talk for half an hour—positively for a full half-hour—twice every Sunday in their pulpits. I went into the church of such a man once—by the purest accident, of course—and I hope I shall never make such a mistake again."

"Well, I don't know many of the clergymen here," responded Guy; "but there's one man I've come across, Mr. Cheverton, of St. Enoch's——"

"Oh, don't speak of him!" uttered Mr. Dulcimer, in a tone of anguish. "I wouldn't have mentioned any names, but Cheverton is the very type and pattern of

the men I've been referring to. How came such a man in the Church? Why, he doesn't know the difference between A and B. As soon as he opens his mouth——"

"Not know the difference between A and B?" exclaimed Guy, now entirely nonplussed. "Do you mean that he doesn't know his alphabet?"

"I mean the difference between A sharp and B flat," replied Mr. Dulcimer impressively. "He has absolutely *no* ear for music; he couldn't intone the Litany if his life depended upon it. What business has such a man in the Church? The singing at St. Enoch's is simply frenzying, and calculated to demoralize the entire neighbourhood. But what can you expect? The man wears a surplice that looks as if he slept in it—it's just like a nightgown—climbs up a corkscrew stair-

case into a pulpit like St. Stylites' column, and then holds forth on every subject under heaven in exactly the same tone of voice he talks in every day!"

"I don't think I ever noticed the cut of his surplice," answered Guy; "but I confess I have been struck with his sermons. He is a most independent thinker, and almost always says something that never occurred to me before."

"But what *right* has he to be an independent thinker?" asked Mr. Dulcimer, in an earnest undertone. "We don't *want* thinkers in the Church. In fact, with a settled creed, I cannot say I look upon sermons as at all necessary; but if we must have them, they should never last more than ten minutes, and even then be confined to just a few remarks upon the continuity of Church history, or the beauties of the Church's institutions.

Nothing, in my view, is so irksome as a long discourse that makes any demand upon one's intellectual faculties. The important point is, first, to bring the service to such perfection that it goes off without a hitch; then, if you care for a sermon at the end, just to give the choristers a rest, let it be as short and soothing as possible, with no so-called 'original' ideas, or disturbing effusions of any kind. Anything of that nature is entirely out of date now, and nothing is considered worse form."

"Well, all that is quite new to me," said Guy, much amused; "and I'm afraid I don't at all agree with you. I'm very fond of clever sermons, though they're rare enough. Among the Dissenters, now——"

"Dissenters?" repeated Mr. Dulcimer vaguely; "let me see—oh yes, I remember now. They are Socinians, I believe, are they not?"

"Socinians, indeed!" exclaimed Guy indignantly. "Do you really mean to say you don't know anything about Dissenters?"

"Not very much," said Mr. Dulcimer; "of course I've heard there are such people, and I've always understood that they're most of them Socinians, or Socialists, or something equally schismatic and revolutionary. But, naturally, I've never entered any of their conventicles, nor have I, to my knowledge, ever spoken to one."

"Well, you're speaking to one now, then," said Guy, with irrepressible enjoyment; "and to the son of a Dissenting minister, too. We are neither Socinians nor Socialists — in fact, my father's a Conservative on most points——"

"Is it possible!" ejaculated Mr. Dulcimer breathlessly, gazing at young Miller

in shocked astonishment. "But, my dear fellow—well, I am astonished! I trust I have not hurt your feelings; but has it never struck you what a sin it is for any man to preach without having been ordained? It is one of the worst of schisms! Of course you can have no sacraments; and as for——"

"Indeed we have, though, just as much as you," interrupted Guy.

"And you mean to tell me that the Eucharist, or some travesty of it, is actually celebrated by an unordained man?" pursued Mr. Dulcimer, in awe-struck tones.

This was too much for Guy, who burst into a peal of hearty laughter. Mr. Dulcimer looked distressed and shocked, and was quite unable to understand what there was to be amused at.

"Do you not see," he said, very

earnestly, "that all Dissenters are living in a state of open rebellion against our Holy Church, and laying sacrilegious hands on the most sacred mysteries of our faith?"

"I don't, indeed," replied Guy, quite unimpressed by the young clergyman's genuine consternation. "I can't argue with you in this crowd; but I'll say this—that if your idea of worship is confined to such religious concerts as you have been describing to me, followed by ten minutes of a so-called sermon, with nothing in it but a string of brainless platitudes, you can't blame those who repudiate it with impatience. Do the 'orders' you set so much store by transform a stupid preacher into a clever one, or inspire with 'authority' the twaddle of some young man not much older than myself, without two ideas in his head?

Do you seriously mean that sensible men and women ought to avoid such masters of sacred oratory as Punshon, or Norman McLeod, or Guthrie, or Newman Hall, in favour of some raw curate, simply because the curate has been ordained by one of your bishops?"

"I am unacquainted with the names you mention," replied Mr. Dulcimer gently; "and, if they are schismatics, it is no wonder I do not know them. As I said before, I do not attach much value to sermons; a perfect service is the important part of public worship, and unquestioning obedience to the ordinances of our Holy Church our most essential duty. It is not for you or anybody to decide whether a curate is raw or not. The true question is: Has he received episcopal authority? Is he a true priest? and if so, I really cannot see that anything else is necessary."

"Except an ear for music, I suppose," put in Guy politely.

Poor Mr. Dulcimer blushed, and looked uneasy; and then a great desire came over them both to be delivered from each other. The eyes of each wandered in a different direction, as though looking for somebody who might come up and terminate the *tête-à-tête;* but everyone was busy talking in little groups, and for several seconds no help was forthcoming. At last a diversion was made, and a very unexpected one it was. Dr. Jacobs rose from his chair, and began clearing his throat nervously; then, with a tremendous effort to make himself heard, said:

"Ladies and gentlemen,—If you will kindly follow me into the room below, seven or eight at a time, the Professor of Uranography intends to favour us with

a short address upon the spectroscope, accompanied by some experiments in spectrum analysis."

This announcement caused a sudden cessation of the clamour that had previously prevailed, and a general movement was made towards the door. In ten minutes the crowd was considerably less, and the room felt cooler; it was also easier to speak, and even possible to walk about a little. Guy, who had not thrust himself forward, preferring to wait until the rush was over, came for the first time into contact with Cecil; and the two lads, who had got rather tired of standing, were glad of the opportunity afforded by a vacant sofa to sit down and chat quietly awhile.

"And whom have you been talking with all the time?" said Guy, passing a pocket-handkerchief over his hot brow.

"I've not the remotest idea," replied Cecil, with a comic look. "I was introduced to three or four people who all looked alike to me, but I never caught one of their names. I amused myself by watching you part of the time."

"The deuce you did!" laughed Guy. "Why, I never saw you at all. I was paired off for I don't know how long with Miss Crewe."

"The learned and beautiful Hypatia!" remarked Cecil. "Do you know, I admire Hypatia immensely. She has a brand-new theory in her head every time one meets her, and she's always so splendidly consistent in whatever character she may happen to be adopting for the nonce. I've seen her do High Art to perfection; dress, gesture, terminology and all complete. Last time we met she was Renaissance, and she's not bad when she goes

in for the austere Classical; but I've never known her more perfect than one afternoon a couple of weeks ago, when she was tripping about a meadow picking buttercups. On that occasion she was Early English. What is she to-night?"

"Goodness knows!" exclaimed Guy. "I couldn't tell you what she talked about if my life depended on it. Hullo! there are some people coming back already. Suppose we go below and see what's going on?"

"Come along, then," assented Cecil, rising.

They passed out of the drawing-room, followed one or two stragglers downstairs, and eventually found themselves in a good-sized parlour at the back of the house, carefully fitted up for the occasion. On a table at one end stood a spectroscope, with lamp and so on, in due form;

in front were a number of persons, each taking his or her turn to enjoy a peep; the walls were appropriately garnished with a variety of celestial charts, while on one side sat the Professor, an amiable and portentously learned old gentleman, explaining the theory of spectrum analysis to the company at large.

"The spectroscope, ladies and gentlemen," the Professor was saying as they entered, "is, as you are doubtless aware, an instrument for separating luminous vibrations of different wave-lengths, and the bands of colour you are about to see are those which form the component parts of the light of the incandescent material. It is by means of the spectroscope that we have been enabled to discover the constituent elements of many of the heavenly bodies; our own sun, for instance; Sirius—that wonderful and giant

orb—and, in fact, an indefinite number of others. Now, this," he continued, after a manipulation of the apparatus—"this is the spectrum of oxygen. It is extremely beautiful, and remarkable for the number of its lines. Whenever we find this particular combination in examining the spectrum of a star, we may be perfectly sure of the presence of oxygen in an incandescent state."

Each person now passed in front of the table, and, sitting down for a few seconds on a chair placed for the purpose, peered with one eye through the aperture; then, with many exclamations of interest and delight, made way for the next comer. Cecil was just about to step forward in his turn, when a large lady, elaborately got up in an extensive dress, and brandishing a conspicuous pair of gold eyeglasses, came swimming pompously into the room.

"Good-evening, Mr. Professor!" ejaculated this imposing person, in stentorian tones. "And so this is a spectroscope, is it? Well, there's nothing like science, after all. Now, this is what I call really interesting. What, may I have a peep?" she continued, pushing past Cecil and several others who had been waiting for some time. "Oh, what pretty colours! It's almost as pretty as a kaleidoscope. And, pray, what may all this be, I wonder?"

"That's the spectrum of oxygen," replied the Professor.

"Is it indeed, now!" exclaimed the lady patronizingly. "Dear me, what curious-looking maps those are upon the wall! Oh, Mr. Professor, I do wish you'd tell me all about the stars. I'm so fond of stars; and yet, do you know, I don't know anything at all about them. What's that

one, now?"—indicating with her pudgy forefinger a certain spot upon the map.

"That's Cassiopeia," answered the old gentleman rather curtly. "It's a constellation."

"Really!" said the large lady with approval. "Cassiopeia — I shall try and not forget. And, now, where's the earth?"

The Professor pointed out the spot to her, wishing she would get up and let someone else sit down. But the large lady seemed vastly comfortable where she was, and showed no sign of moving.

"Dear me!" she said, examining the indicated speck through her double eyeglass. "Pray, Mr. Professor, whereabouts is the Milky Way? I am so much interested in the Milky Way. Can't you show us the spectrum of it now, or is it too far off?"

"I wish this ridiculous old woman would make herself scarce," muttered Guy *sotto voce* to Cecil, as a suppressed titter went round the circle. "Have you any idea who she is?"

"Don't you know?" returned Cecil in the same tone. "She's the Prehistoric Heraldry man's wife—Mrs. Ramsbottom. Thinks herself no end of a swell, because Lord Butternut put up at their house last Commem, when there wasn't another bed to be had. She fancies herself a tremendous authority on the peerage, and tells everybody she can get hold of what the Ramsbottom crest is—a ram's head, with the motto *Audi alteram partem.* You never saw such a shocking old snob. I think myself she's far better fun than the spectroscope."

"I hope I'm not monopolizing the chair," said Mrs. Ramsbottom at last, the Pro-

fessor having briefly satisfied her curiosity about the Milky Way. But as it was obvious to the meanest intelligence, her own included, that that was just what she was doing, nobody reassured her upon the point.

"Well," she continued, turning to the spectroscope again, "I declare these colours quite fascinate me. I should like to have a ribbon like them for my cap. Can't you show us any other patterns, Mr. Professor?"

"I believe," said the Professor with dry politeness, "there are several people in the room who have been waiting some time to see the spectrum you are now looking at. I shall be able to show you another as soon as everybody has seen this."

"Oh, *pray* come, *pray* come and look," said Mrs. Ramsbottom, turning in a most

affable manner to the people behind her. "Now, Mr. Professor," she continued, rising from the chair, "I shall keep close to you, so as not to lose any of your explanations. Do you know, I quite thought that the spectroscope must have something to do with spiritualism; the name is a little misleading, you know. But of course I understand all about it now."

The spectra of nitrogen, sodium, and other substances were then exhibited in order, and in a few minutes Guy and Cecil, having seen enough, slipped upstairs again. They found the guests just going in to supper, and a lady was forthwith consigned to the care of each.

"I think I have seen you before, to-night," said Guy's fair charge abruptly, a young lady of some nine-and-twenty years of age, with a furze-bush of light

fluffy hair overhanging her forehead. "You were with Mr. Dulcimer."

"I was," assented Guy, smiling.

"Talking about Church matters, no doubt," continued the young lady. "Isn't Mr. Dulcimer *too* delightful? I think he's perfectly sweet. Don't you like the Church of England? I think it's such a splendid institution. And there's something so awfully nice about Apostolical Succession."

"As embodied in Mr. Dulcimer?" suggested Guy.

"Now that's too bad of you," replied the young lady, making great havoc among the sandwiches. She was covered with bangles, and a variety of other metallic decorations, which rattled every time she moved like a bunch of manacles. "Why, there's Mr. Winstanley, I declare! You know Mr. Winstanley, I think?"—

turning and twisting her head about with a clatter from top to toe. "How do you do, Mr. Winstanley? Here's Mr. Miller saying the most shocking things. Where have you been all this time? I haven't seen you for months."

"I've only just returned from the Congo," replied Mr. Winstanley, a bearded, sunburnt man, with a grave smile.

"Really!" said the young lady, in her abrupt *staccato*. "How very interesting! Wasn't it very hot?"

"Rather," replied Mr. Winstanley.

"And what sort of a place is it?" continued the young lady. "Did you get much dancing there?"

The traveller stared a little.

"Dancing?" he said vaguely. "What—do you mean among the natives?"

"Well—natives, or whatever you call them," said the young lady, with a jerk

that sent her shackles clashing again. "Do they reverse?"

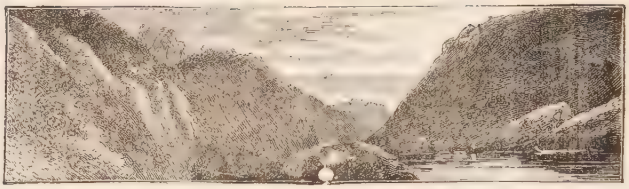
"Well," said Mr. Winstanley very gravely, "I don't think they do—at present. But of course they might learn, if they had anyone to teach them."

"Why didn't *you* teach them?" asked the young lady, chinking all over.

"Let me offer you some jelly," said Mr. Winstanley, relieving her of her plate.

"Oh, thank you; but Mr. Miller is looking after me," she replied, turning her head with another rattle towards the place where Guy had been standing. But that young gentleman, only too willing to rid himself of this chattering person, had most ungallantly resigned his post in favour of the traveller from the Congo, and was nowhere to be seen. Cecil, meanwhile, had found his way into another part of the supper-room, where

he was plying an old lady with the most solid comestibles procurable, and here, when the ladies were disposed of, he and Guy sat down together and had their suppers in comfort. Half an hour later they were able to take leave of their host and hostess, and to enjoy the refreshment of a much-needed cigarette upon their way home.



CHAPTER IV.

DEACONS DINING.

The dinner engagement referred to by Mr. Miller in conversation with ex-deacon Boyce was at the house of Mr. Henry Gervoise, the banker, to whom allusion has been already made. It will be readily understood that the dinner-party, as such, was not a very general institution in Seaborough. The favourite form of entertainment, especially in Nonconformist circles, was a nondescript meal called 'high tea'—a function at which the table was covered with a variety of incongruous comestibles, such as cold ham and chickens,

cakes, puffs, jam-tarts, a shape or two of jelly or blancmange, with perhaps a hot dish to begin upon, consisting of a stew, or some strange attempt at curry. Such, we say, was the form usually taken by Dissenting hospitality in Seaborough; there being a vague notion that a banquet of the indigestible-heterogeneous order, placed ruthlessly upon the board all at once—at which everybody had to pass plates to and fro the whole time, and most persons were expected to 'help'—was of a more 'friendly' nature than a well-served seven o'clock dinner. Besides, a 'late' dinner had, somehow or other, a rather carnal flavour about it, and was, for that reason, considered more in harmony with Episcopalian worldliness than with the simplicity of Dissent. It was on such occasions that occurred those mild flirtations between the young gentlemen and

ladies of the congregation which alleviate so pleasantly the hardships of the religious pilgrimage, and that those inestimable opportunities were offered for an unbending, even to the point of jocoseness, on the part of the minister, which are so soothing to souls disturbed by the menaces of the previous Sunday evening. But on the present occasion, as we have said, the minister was bidden to a dinner, not a tea—his host being a wealthy banker, though deacon of a Nonconformist church; for if a banker asks you to his house at all, it is understood that the thing will be correctly done; and Mr. Gervoise, who paid his cook five-and-forty pounds a year, got full value for his money.

The guests who now gathered round the handsomely-appointed table of Mr. Gervoise belonged, for the most part, to the *élite* of Queen Street Chapel. Among

them, of course, was Mr. J. Walker Searle —the picture of complacent respectability, and lavish of patronizing smiles; and with Mr. Searle was Mrs. Searle, a tall, rustling lady with a high colour, high cheek-bones, and high nose—whose gait was of a somewhat prancing order, and the general effect of whom, as viewed from a respectful distance, was distinctly equine. Then there was a Miss Dabbs, a very ardent member, who, as a maiden lady of independent means, was much regarded in the community; while, to balance Miss Dabbs, there appeared a certain elderly young man named Gough—shy, worthy, old-fashioned, and discreet—who was popularly believed to be exceedingly well-to-do. Invitations had also been sent to Mr. and Mrs. Metcalfe, the homœopathic doctor and his wife, an amiable pair of faddists, whose personal popularity among the congregation was

decidedly great in proportion to the confidence reposed in their peculiar therapeutics; and to Mr. Claggett, the eminent solicitor, who represented a somewhat extreme form of political Dissent. In fact, it was one of Mr. Claggett's most cherished convictions that he was a badly-persecuted individual. Not, of course, that he had ever been fined or imprisoned for his religious convictions, or that an oppressive and bigoted Government had ever interfered with his career in life, or prevented his becoming, as in truth he was, a prosperous and wealthy citizen; but that, being a Dissenter, he felt himself looked down upon; that he did not possess the social standing of his chief rival in the town, who was a Churchman; and that the denomination to which he belonged occupied an inferior and altogether subordinate position *quoad* another which he

detested with all his soul. The party was completed by a good old widow lady, one Mrs. Trinder, whose special forte lay in the attempted reclamation of the giddier sort of shop-girls, and the unwearied distribution of tracts.

Of course it is scarcely needful to point out that all these estimable persons were members of the Government party in the chapel. Being, too, by their position in life, possessed of a certain amount of influence, they each had a not inconsiderable following; so that the Government was always sure of a substantial majority whenever any important question was brought before the church members at the periodical meetings of that body. Their attitude towards the Opposition was one of rigorous Christian forbearance. Among themselves they would sometimes refer distantly to the Opposition members under

some appropriate Scriptural figure, generally adopted from St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, or the General Epistle of St. Jude; but such allusions were always understood as of a private and confidential nature, and in all official capacities the Oppositionists were dealt with by the strictly constitutional methods of church suffrage.

"Well," said Mr. Searle cheerfully, after subjecting his soup to a somewhat noisy process of deglutition, "the season 'll be on us now within a week or two, and the place be beginnin' to look a bit gay. The town wants somethin' to keep it up to the mark every now and then. I fancy the lodging keepers didn't do over and above well last year."

"Very true," remarked Miss Dabbs, in a somewhat thin voice. "I must say I'm always glad when the season comes round

again; it's so cheerful to see the streets full of visitors. And then, of course, it's so good for trade."

"And such an opportunity for sowing the good seed," added Mrs. Trinder, whose agricultural exertions were a matter of common fame. "I always find my stock of leaflets go twice as fast in the summer as at any other time."

"Ah, to be sure," assented Miss Dabbs, a little absently. "Don't you think, Mr. Miller, it would be desirable to take advantage of the presence of the visitors to get up that bazaar that we've been thinking of so long?"

"Bazaar—what bazaar?" asked Mr. Miller, opening his eyes.

"Now really, Mr. Miller, you are too bad," rejoined Miss Dabbs in a tone of caressing reproach. "Why, a bazaar for the balance of our chapel-debt, to be sure.

I've been working for it for weeks—made all sorts of pretty things already ; and so have several of the other ladies. It would be too cruel to disappoint us after all."

"Really, Miss Dabbs, I have no wish to disappoint you," replied the minister, with a cautious smile. "Get up your bazaar, by all means, and be sure we shall be only too grateful for any profits you may make out of it. I promise not to interfere with you in any way."

"Oh, but you mustn't back out of *your* share in the undertaking," said Miss Dabbs vivaciously. "A bazaar without the presence and the assistance of the minister is an impossibility — a simple impossibility. That would never do, would it, Mr. Gervoise?"

The banker was a tall, solemn-looking, rather cadaverous gentleman, of prim manners and very evangelical views.

Bazaars had never occurred to him as possible means of grace, and he therefore hesitated to commit himself to an opinion.

"Oh, certainly not—certainly not," he answered irresolutely. "That is—I mean, of course, it would never do to have anything in connection with the chapel in which the minister would not feel justified in co-operating."

"I don't suppose a bazaar is as objectionable as all that," remarked Mr. Miller, amused in spite of himself. "But what part do you want *me* to play in the affair?"

"Oh, a most important one," replied Miss Dabbs. "In the first place, you'll have to get photographed in your gown and bands, and then we shall sell the photographs at five shillings a copy. That's always a sure thing. Then you'll

have to preside at some raffle or lottery, you know—get as many people as you can to take chances, and keep on saying funny things to make them laugh ; no one can do that so well as a minister. And the last day all the things that aren't sold will be put up at auction, and of course you'll be the auctioneer."

"Don't you think it might heighten the effect if I were to black my face, or perform a few acrobatic exploits?" suggested Mr. Miller with much gravity.

"I don't think I quite like joking on such solemn subjecks," remarked Mrs. Searle, tossing her head till her glossy ringlets vibrated again. "Nobody wants you to black your face, Mr. Miller; 'twouldn't be at all becomin' in a minister o' the Gospel, in *my* opinion. But I'll tell you what; a *real* black minister wouldn't be a bad draw, if only we could

get hold of one. I wonder, now, if there aren't any interésting native pastors in England from Africa or the South Seas? If we could get one of those, now, and make him perform a few heathen dances, or dress up in the things he used to wear before he was converted, just to show his change of heart, you know, it really might be a great attraction, besides giving the affair a sort of missionary complexion, too."

"I should advise you to make sure that he ever wore anything at all in his unconverted days before you give him a perfectly free hand in the matter, Mrs. Searle," said Mr. Miller dryly.

Mrs. Searle drew herself up, frowned, coloured, and gave everybody to understand by these marks of protest that she considered the observation an outrage. Her husband chuckled audibly.

"Well, but what'll us deacons have to do in the affair?" he said jocosely, addressing Miss Dabbs. "Can't leave us out in the cold, you know—eh, Gervoise?"

The banker winced, as he always did when his fellow-deacon spoke to him thus familiarly.

"I think," he said, with a certain solemn playfulness, "that we had better leave all that to our wives. I fear that I, at any rate, should be sadly out of place in such a scene as has been described."

"What do *you* say, Mrs. Gervoise?" said Mr. Searle in his strident tones. "Are you up to keeping a refreshment-stall, or selling folks a lot of rubbish that they don't want, in a good cause?"

Mrs. Gervoise, a mild, gentle little woman, dressed in perfect taste, and ever anxious to make things comfortable for everybody, replied that no doubt the

object was a very good one, but she was not quite sure how far such things as lotteries and raffles were consistent with the spirit of the New Testament.

"I confess that I have no love for them myself," assented the minister, turning to his hostess; "and I can't help thinking it a pity when we are forced into a sort of commercial enterprise, such as bazaars really are, in order to raise funds for educational and religious purposes. It almost amounts to a reflection upon our Christian profession."

"Well," said Mr. Metcalfe, speaking for the first time, "I'm not quite so sure of that. Of course, the early Christians didn't hold bazaars and fancy-fairs; they couldn't, poor creatures, persecuted and hunted as they were. But there's no doubt we have Old Testament authority for such institutions, and I don't see, my-

self, why we shouldn't follow that authority if we choose."

"Oh, how delightful!" cried Miss Dabbs, grateful for this unlooked-for assistance. "Pray, where is it to be found?"

"In the Book of Exodus," replied Mr. Metcalfe, rather enjoying the sensation he had caused. "We read there that when the Tabernacle wanted furnishing, all the women who were wise-hearted did spin with their hands a store of purple and scarlet and fine linen, and then brought up the fabrics to the tent of meeting — whether for sale or actual use doesn't matter; it was for a religious purpose. And all the women whose hearts stirred within them spun goats' hair; every man and woman whose heart made them willing helped Moses to do the work that the Lord had commanded him to do. Well, that's just

what people do nowadays for a bazaar; and so, you see, there's actually a Divine commandment for it."

"I never knew that before," said old Mrs. Trinder with interest. "I'm glad to find bazaars so Scriptural, and I shouldn't mind even holding a stall in one myself. It does alter the case, doesn't it, Mr. Miller?" turning to that gentleman with an eager look on her benevolent old face.

"I don't think the two cases run together at all," observed Mr. Claggett argumentatively. "There's nothing to prove that the needlework made by the Jewish women *was* sold, as people nowadays sell chair-backs and dolls' frocks at fancy-fairs. The things were made to ornament the Tabernacle with. Pray, do you seriously suppose, Mr. Metcalfe, that Moses and Aaron got up raffles and

lotteries, or that Miriam is likely to have presided at a stall of fancy articles? It seems to me your argument is worth nothing at all. The circumstances are wholly different."

"Really, Mr. Claggett," exclaimed Mrs. Searle, "I must say your way of handling Scripture is perfectly irreverent. What is *your* opinion on the question, Mr. Miller?"

"I really haven't thought much about it," replied the minister, whose amusement at the discussion was fast changing into a sense of boredom. "However, there's plenty of time; it's not necessary to come to any decision in a hurry. And I don't think it's very much to the point whether they held a fancy-fair in the wilderness or not. I should be sorry to take the Israelites as a pattern for my own conduct, in any case."

"We are certainly told that they were a stiff-necked generation," said mild Mrs. Gervoise, anxious to shield the minister from any suspicion of laxity that might attach to his last remark; "but in the case mentioned by Mr. Metcalfe there was actually a Divine commandment, wasn't there now?"

"Well—it might appear so, from the text, perhaps," acknowledged the minister, with a reserve that rather puzzled innocent Mrs. Gervoise. "It is not always easy, however, without a sound critical knowledge of early Hebrew ethics and the Hebrew *Zeit-Geist* to place a just valuation upon the figure of speech to which you no doubt refer. In fact, the question is a very wide one, and I am not disposed to pronounce upon it one way or another just now."

"But how *can* we doubt? The narrative

is *inspired!*" exclaimed poor Mrs. Gervoise in dismay.

Mr. Miller smiled, and determined he would not be drawn into any further discussion.

"I think we are wandering a little from the point," he said diplomatically. "The question is purely one of ethics; and ethics are a very complicated subject. Did it ever strike you," he continued, turning to the banker, "whence we have derived the ethical system which is now generally recognised in society?"

"I have always imagined that we owe it to the highest source of all," replied Mr. Gervoise solemnly.

"Not altogether, I think," remarked Mr. Miller, bracing himself to a more interesting discussion than such trumpery as fancy-fairs. "I was referring more particularly to our conventional code of

morals; and I believe you'll find that it is the governing classes whose influence and political power have made it what it is. Take pecuniary obligations, for example. Suppose a man dies insolvent, just after starting his son in life with an expensive University education. If ever there was a case in which a youth ought to be held legally responsible for his father's debts, that is one. Why, it is really the creditors who have paid the lad's college-bills; and yet they have no claim upon him whatever. Now take the National Debt. The persons who contracted it are long since dead, and so are the persons who advanced the money: the matter was one between those two parties, and neither, I maintain, had either the right or the power to bind their descendants by their acts; yet what do we see? The liability is acknowledged by

men who weren't even born when it was incurred, while you and I, who had no more to do with it than Julius Cæsar, are being heavily taxed to pay the interest. Now, how do you reconcile this anomaly?"

"You astonish me!" exclaimed the banker, quite startled out of his habitual primness. "What, you an advocate for repudiation? Why, it would be pure robbery!"

"Of course, of course it would," said Mr. Miller. "I know that well enough; I'm only arguing the question academically. But what I want you to tell me, as a purely ethical subject of inquiry, is, why should I be taxed to pay the interest on a debt which neither I nor anybody now alive ever had anything to do with? That puts the matter plainly enough; and I want a straightforward reply."

"Well, but," said the banker, looking

bewildered, "if responsibility did not descend from generation to generation, how could either public or private business be carried on?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied the minister, secretly delighted to have stirred the wealthy deacon out of his solemnity. "It has never been tried, has it? All I say is that the code of honour which forbids men to repudiate the liabilities of their predecessors is purely artificial, and, in the former instance I mentioned, has no legal recognition. Don't you see, then, on what an arbitrary and conventional basis our system of public ethics rests?"

"Hear, hear!" cried Mr. Searle, rapping the table with the handle of his knife, and laughing coarsely. "I see plain enough what the minister's a-drivin' at. He thinks we ought to leave the chapel debt alone, and let the creditors' descen-

dants fight it out with ours. Can't you ferret out a passage, now, Mr. Miller, bearin' on the point? It's always as well to be fortified with Scripture if we can, you know."

"J. Walker, I'm perfectly astonished at you, that I am!" ejaculated his wife, with an indignant rustle of her apple-green silk gown. "I thought you knew your Bible rather better than what *that* comes to. I'm sure I don't know what the minister means by saying the Bible doesn't teach morals; but Bible morality's good enough for me, and if you can prove to me as it encourages people to cheat their creditors, we'd better shut up the shop at once. I've no notion of such talk myself — it's real indecent among church-members, who ought to be a city set upon a hill, with their lights a-shinin' like a bushel which can *not* be hid."

The unfortunate pastor, who had simply broached the subject from a love of argument, without any serious intent whatever, now found that he had puzzled and rather shocked his host, scandalized the deacon's wife, and provoked the embarrassing facetiousness of the terrible deacon himself. The position was absurd enough, but some effort must be made to turn the conversation into a more congenial channel. After all, it was not Mrs. Searle's fault if she was unable to see a joke.

"Come, Mrs. Searle," he said good-humouredly, "you mustn't father your husband's heresies on me. It serves me right, however, for introducing theoretical discussions in the middle of a good dinner and in the presence of ladies. I shall be wiser another time. It was only this morning that I found myself in the throes of another discussion — of not quite so

abstruse a nature, but quite as thorny—with a worthy person whom we all know. Have you seen anything of our friend Boyce to-day, I wonder, Mr. Searle?"

The ladies all looked up with interest. A personal topic had much more attraction for them than abstract theories, especially when a fellow-member was in question. And Mr. Boyce was a very trying member—a member whose bellicose tone of piety afforded a refreshing dispensation from the exercise of that official loving-kindness which somehow palls upon the best of us at times—so that the mention of his name was attended with a general sense of pleasure and relaxation.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Searle briskly, "to be sure I have. Yes; he came in to see me just after dinn—lunch, I mean. Wants to get up a Scripture exposition class for our young people, with

himself as chief expounder. It struck me at the time as rather queer that you should have assented to such an arrangement, and I thought I'd ask you about it."

"I assented?" echoed the minister, dropping his fork in amazement. "Do you mean to say he told you that I had countenanced him for a single moment? That man has strange ideas of truth, I must confess."

"Well, I thought it could hardly be," replied Mr. Searle. "But he assured me most distinctly that you had referred him to Mr. Gervoise and I, and I certainly understood him to say that you 'ad no objection if us deacons 'adn't. I'm quite clear about that. What, isn't it true?"

"It is precisely the reverse of true," said Mr. Miller. "I did tell him he could do nothing of the sort without your approval, but was careful to add that in any case I

was afraid my own approval must be withheld. The man is utterly unfit to teach anybody. His ignorance is simply crass."

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Trinder, much concerned. "Still, you know, not many wise, not many mighty, are called. And I always think it's such a pity for brethren not to dwell together in unity. I dare say the poor man misunderstood what you said, you know; he couldn't have intended to say anything untrue."

"I'm sure I always thought he was a good man at heart, although he does vote against us at church-meetings," said Mrs. Gervoise, in her kind way. "He may not be very clever, but surely, as regards the Word, he may be guided by the Spirit. Are we not told that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings——"

"My dear lady," interrupted Mr. Miller, "Boyce is neither a babe nor a suckling,

believe me; he is a well-meaning but very ignorant and conceited man, who is always making disturbances about one thing or another. I hope I am not speaking rashly or uncharitably; but that is the simple fact. And he is a difficult subject to deal with, because it is impossible to depend upon anything he says. There are some people in the world who seem to have no clear apprehension what strict accuracy of statement means, and I am much afraid that Mr. Boyce is one of them."

"I fear he's rather a cloud without water," remarked Mrs. Searle, leaning back in her chair and fanning herself, with a severe look. "We are distinctly warned that such should appear in the last days, and I'm sure nobody with any eyes in his head can doubt the fulfilment of *that* prophecy. However, the tares and the wheat are both to grow together until the harvest,

and then, you know, the tares will be burnt up. It's not for us to do anything but just to wait and watch."

"Do you mean to say you don't think Mr. Boyce has been born again?" said Miss Dabbs, with excited curiosity. "It's very strange, now, if he hasn't. Why, he's been a church-member for over twenty years!"

"Ah!" said Mrs. Searle, snapping her mouth together, and looking unutterable things. "All that's very well; but we know well enough that many are called but few chosen. However, far be it from *me* to sit in judgment. I *never* judge my neighbours, let them be as bad as they may; it's not my business, and I never do it. I only see them as they are, and draw my own conclusions."

"Well," remarked Mr. Searle decidedly, "whether Boyce is born again or whether

he isn't, I don't think we can allow 'im to take the lead in any Scripture exposition class. As the minister says, very truly, he's too ignorant; but beyond that, it 'ud give him a position of influence in the congregation that it's just as well 'e shouldn't 'ave. 'Twouldn't be judicious at all, to my thinking."

"I don't see how you're going to prevent him getting up an exposition class if he wants to," put in Mr. Claggett disputatiously. "You can prevent his holding the class in any of the chapel premises, of course; but what'll you do if he gets a place of his own?"

"H'm," said Mr. Searle reflectively. "Well, nobody supposes we can prevent his doin' what he likes in 'is own house; and there's no reason why we should try to, so long as the chapel isn't any way compromised. The only way will be to

withhold all *official* recognition of his meetings, and discourage attendance at 'em—let it be known that we don't approve of 'em, and us as are parents abstain from sending our children. I don't believe, myself, he'll get very much of an audience."

"Well, you know," rejoined Mr. Claggett, "I think you ought to make pretty sure of your ground before you decide on boycotting a fellow-member because he's in a humble sphere o' life. I do, indeed. Boyce is a tailor—well and good. A job-tailor, if you like—a sort of cobbler. Well, the Apostles were fishermen—downright common, illiterate peasants—a good deal lower in the social scale than tailors, or haberdashers either, if you come to that. Don't suppose they could have expounded the Prophets, or the Pentateuch, if their lives had depended upon it. And yet it is to them, as instruments, that we owe

everything we know to-day of Christian truth."

"Ah, but they were inspired!" retorted Mr. Searle, who did not relish the lawyer's quite uncalled-for reference to the haberdasher interest. "When Boyce produces anything that can be named in the same week with the Epistles of Peter, or James, or John, we won't mind 'is holding as many Scripture classes as he likes—or taking an occasional service in the chapel itself, if that's all. But I don't think there's much chance of that at present; eh, Mr. Claggett?"

"I'll tell you what occurs to me about it," unexpectedly remarked the doctor's wife. She was a faded-looking lady, with watery blue eyes and smooth light-brown hair; and she had a curious knack of remaining for hours in an apparently half-torpid condition, from which she would

suddenly emerge with a sort of spring, and then relapse again. "It seems to me," she continued, amid a general silence, "that Mr. Boyce is trying to form this class in order to improve his position in the church. It's a long time since he was ever asked to lead in prayer at any of the meetings, and I expect it's been preying on his mind. He isn't made as much of as he thinks he ought to be, and so he's anxious to do something for himself. Perhaps if he hadn't felt himself so put upon he 'ud never have thought of this at all."

"I believe Mrs. Metcalfe's hit the right nail on the head!" exclaimed Mr. Searle, with noisy emphasis. "And now I come to think of it, it isn't the first symptom I've observed of the same thing. I remember one night, at the Serious Tidewaiters', he insisted on gettin' on his legs and addressin' the meetin' at such length I had to call

'im to order; why, there was no stoppin' the man; and the nonsense he would talk! Besides, he'd no business there at all; he wasn't a Tidewaiter, and didn't belong to the association. Another time he wanted to join the Bathing-women's Counterpoint Society; went round to all the bathing-machines canvassing, and trying to make the women vote for 'im. 'Course, he failed there too. And as for calling on 'im to lead in prayer—well, it's safer not to—much safer. There's no knowing what he mightn't say; pray against us to our very faces, I shouldn't wonder! And personalities in public prayer, from one church member to another, are not conducive to Christian fellowship."

"I wonder whether we couldn't give him something to do in connection with the bazaar!" cried Miss Dabbs, with the air of one who has had a sudden inspiration.

"It would certainly look like a compliment, and there wouldn't be any risk, you know, for there's nothing doctrinal about bazaars. He really might be made useful in some way—collecting tickets at the door, or looking after the workmen. Indeed, I shouldn't be surprised if he set his face against it altogether, and gave us a little trouble, unless we associated him directly with it somehow."

"Well, I have no objection," said Mr. Searle graciously. "But you'll have to look after him pretty sharp, if you don't want him to run the whole concern."

Mr. Miller sat sipping his claret with an indifferent air, and took no part in the discussion. He was not sufficiently interested in Mr. Boyce to diplomatize, contenting himself with administering a quiet snub to the unruly member when such a step appeared to him a necessity, but troubling

his head very little about him in an ordinary way. Matters of this sort, he considered, were best left to the deacons and the women, who not only had a kind of genius for arranging social differences, but actually enjoyed it. As regarded Boyce's homiletical or exegetical aspirations, he would certainly countenance nothing of the kind, though, of course, he knew well enough that he had no power to interfere with anything the man might choose to do outside the chapel walls. But as for attempting to conciliate such a person, either by calling upon him to lead in prayer, or by associating him with this proposed bazaar, the idea was incomprehensible to him. If any cajolery of the sort were to be practised, let the deacons and the women practise it—it was out of *his* line altogether.

"Well, this is all very nice and very

fine," said Mr. Claggett, in a tone of voice which implied an opinion on his part that it was neither one nor the other—"this is all very nice and very fine; but what I want to know is, what's the matter with this Mr. Boyce? What does he do disagreeable? I've heard a good deal against him, but it all seems vague—I can't get hold of anything tangible. Does he drink, or is he only unsound in doctrine?"

"*Only* unsound in doctrine!" uttered Mrs. Searle, in a high key. "Well, I'm astonished at you, Mr. Claggett; I'd no idea you were so loose. A drunkard you *may* reclaim, or a prize-fighter, or a play-actor, or a coal-heaver, or a conjurer; indeed, I remember hearing a converted conjurer preach splendidly one night many years ago, when I was a member of the Methodist New Connexion; but if once a

man's lost the simplicity o' the Gospel there's no more hope for him at all—nothing but a certain 'fearful looking for'—*you* know how the passage ends, I dare say."

"Oh dear, dear, this is very sad!" moaned old Mrs. Trinder plaintively. "We'll hope it's not so bad as all that. I never heard that Mr. Boyce was unsound—never once; and I'm sure he's as sober a man as ever was. Besides, I *know* he's a distributor; I've seen him doing it myself. Oh, I'm sure that he's a very earnest man."

"Then what's the matter with him?" repeated Mr. Claggett.

"I think," said Mr. Gervoise from the bottom of the table, in his solemnly polite way, "that there's nothing exactly the 'matter' with Mr. Boyce in that sense. I believe him to be, as Mrs. Trinder says,

a very earnest man; and I believe we shall meet him in heaven if ever we get there ourselves. But, as Mr. Miller has remarked, he has not had many educational privileges; he has, too, a somewhat overweening sense of his spiritual gifts; he is a little impatient of the views of other brethren; he feels, and not unnaturally, the contrast between his present somewhat obscure position in the church, and the influential standing he once occupied; and he generally throws his weight against us when any matter for discussion comes up at church-meetings. Beyond that, however——"

"To put it shortly," interrupted Mrs. Searle, "he's an ignorant, conceited, dissatisfied busybody, who seems to think it the first of all Christian duties to stir up as much strife among brethren as possible. The man's under the firm conviction that

he's a special favourite of the Almighty's, and lays down the law when he gets a chance to a degree that fairly turns me up. It's a pity, to my thinking, he don't have a sect all to himself, where he can be minister, deacon, and congregation all in one. If there *is* one thing more than another that I can't stand, it is spiritual pride; and when I hear a professing Christian throw doubt upon experienced believers like myself being children by adoption and grace, I take his profession for just as much as it's worth, and not a ha'p'orth more."

"Oh!" observed Mr. Claggett, with an irritating smile, "then he has his own opinions about you, as well as you about him?"

"Mr. Claggett," said the deacon's wife impressively, "you've only lately joined our body; and though no one will go to

deny your influence in it, you don't know all the ins and outs of it at present. Yes, Sir, Mr. Boyce no doubt *has* his own opinions of us, and of the minister as well; he doesn't scruple even to carp at the doctrines preached from the pulpit, and says they're like the babblings of an infant, or the gropings of a blind man, or some such stuff, meaning, if you please, that *our* Christian experience amounts to a mere nothing; while he's as much above us in understanding of the Word as Sir Isaac Newton might be above an idiot. Now, that's the sort of thing one can*not* stand, and I see nothing in the Scriptures why we *should* stand it; Paul didn't, at any rate, but spoke right out, and let 'em know what he thought of 'em, in pretty plain language, too."

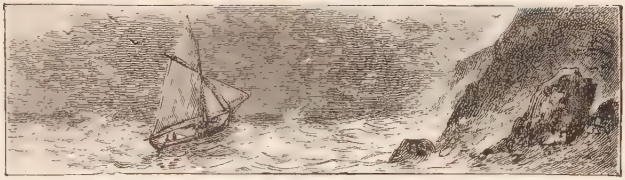
The faintest smile passed over Mr. Miller's lips, as he whimsically wondered

what the Apostle's opinion of Mrs. Searle would have been had they ever met, and whether he would have had the courage to express it to her face. Mr. Claggett, having listened submissively to the lady's impulsive utterance, leaned back in his chair, and addressed a few casual remarks to Mrs. Metcalfe, who sat next to him; but the doctor's wife was buried in her usual torpid state, and answered vaguely. The conversation languished; a general idea pervaded the company that the last word had been said about Mr. Boyce, and that no one could improve on Mrs. Searle. People began to talk fitfully and upon indifferent subjects to their next neighbours, until the appearance, with the fourth course, of a handsome Turkish pudding afforded an opportunity for a universal tribute of praise to Mrs. Gervoise's cook. Mr. Searle now plucked

up amazingly, declaring himself inordinately fond of solid puddings of all sorts, and boisterously reproaching his wife for keeping him on such short commons at home; and when the laughter provoked by this good-humoured sally had subsided, he turned the battery of his facetiousness upon Mr. Gough, the elderly young man before mentioned, whom he chaffed quite unmercifully about his extraordinary dissipation in having attended no fewer than four prayer-and-reading meetings in the course of the previous week. Mr. Gough, not being endowed with the gift of repartee, could only giggle and look sly; whereupon Miss Dabbs, though professing a great partiality for the particular dissipation referred to, suggested that Mr. Gough must find it very dull to be always alone at home, and did not wonder that single gentlemen were driven to seek diversion

out of doors. Mr. Claggett attempted to stem the torrent of all this frivolity by a few tentative remarks upon the oppressions to which Dissenters, as a body, were subjected by the prevailing Erastianism of the times; but as no one present seemed conscious of any individual subjugation, the topic was not very eagerly taken up, and the persecuted gentleman relapsed into moody silence. Mr. Metcalfe was only a little more successful in his allusion to a forthcoming lecture on Geology, the announcement of which had attracted some faint interest when the handbills appeared in the shop-windows a few days previously; in fact, it was evident that serious subjects were to be tabooed, and the remainder of the evening given up to drollery. A reaction, indeed, set in after the ladies had retired; but the gentlemen were not long in joining them, and while

Mrs. Gervoise and Mrs. Trinder gossiped amicably together over their knitting in a quiet corner of the drawing-room, the lively sallies of Mrs. Searle alternated with the ballads of Miss Dabbs in bringing the festivities to a harmonious and hilarious conclusion.



CHAPTER V.

IANTHE.

SEVERAL weeks have passed since Mrs. Jacobs's 'At Home,' and with them the Easter vacation, which Guy Miller, in pursuance of an old engagement, spent with his friend Cecil. It was now the end of April, and the streets of the beautiful old city were once more full of caps and gowns. The summer term, always the brightest and busiest of the year, had, in fact, set in. St. Mary's was beginning to look its best, for the season was a forward one, and the lilacs, laburnums, and red may glowed richly

against the cool gray background of ancient colleges and mediæval mansions; while the spreading lawns, moist with the early rains, lay like sheets of emerald velvet within their fringe of shrubberies. Nature, under such conditions, is not favourable to study. Human nature, at any rate, rebels. The term opened, so to speak, lazily and reluctantly, and the present chapter, which describes an event that happened very shortly after the re-assembling of the colleges, does not deal with matters of a strictly collegiate character.

Three roomy sculling-boats, well filled with ladies, and propelled by a dozen limber youths in flannels and straw hats, sped swiftly up the river under a sapphire sky. The sunlight, falling between the fresh green leaves which lined the river banks, made flecks and dapples on the

lush grass, while the lark, an imperceptible point in high air, sang a fantasia, and the oars made cool music as they dipped and feathered with a pulse-like regularity against the wind and stream. Houses, bridges, tow-paths even, were left behind, forgotten as though they had never existed; only meadows, jewelled with yellow flowers, and shaded by a great tree here and there, sloped to the water's edge; a hundred miles from anywhere, for aught that could be seen.

Then the oars were shipped, the boats went in shore, and everybody landed, chattering. Guy was among them, and so was Cecil, and a few more of our friends—and a very brave and pleasant sight they were, lads and girls, in the universal sunshine of that lovely day. A few young dons mingled with the rest —some of them married men, who had

brought their wives; others still unattached; none of them over thirty-two, some considerably younger. Of course, it was a picnic. That fact there is no getting over, and it may as well be acknowledged at once; but it is not necessary to continue harping upon it. There are many things in life we recognise as such-and-such, but do not obtrude them needlessly where the effect of their introduction would be discordant.

"Come, let us pick cowslips, and weave daisy-garlands," exclaimed a tripping lady in a huge turned-up hat of the very coarsest straw, a cream-coloured robe ornamented at the shoulder with maidenhair and crimson flowers, and a floating gauzy scarf. It was Hypatia, as the Genius of Spring.

"I'll pick what you like, if you'll do the weaving, Miss Crewe," laughed Guy.

"There doesn't seem much choice, however. It's too early for fritilleries, I suppose?"

"Two weeks too early, at least," replied Hypatia, smiling, though sadly. "Well, I suppose they'll pass; and then, oh then——"

"Do you really admire fritilleries?" said Guy. "I think they are such dowdy-looking things; a sort of dull brownish-purple, speckled with dirty white—what can anyone see in them? Nobody would look at them if they didn't happen to be rare."

"To me they're lovely," said Miss Crewe with exaltation. "I delight in their dingy hue; it rests the eye, it suggests undreamt-of harmonies, it speaks to me of secret treasures which the science of chromatics may still have in store for those who study nature. Yes, I love

them—even their speckles; for in those I see their kinship to the thrush, and to the frog, too. Did you never study the affinities of life? You should—the world would become new to you."

"No, I assure you he never did, Miss Crewe," put in Cecil. "If there is an unimaginative Philistine on the earth, it is Guy Miller, on whom you throw away so many pearls of thought. Try me instead — you've never given me a chance!"

Hypatia turned her head towards him, and looked with pleased astonishment straight into his eyes.

"You, Mr. Urquhart?" she said. "Why, I thought you—I mean,' correcting herself hastily, "I never imagined you were accustomed to take an *inner* view of things. By all means, let us talk together."

"You're far too good for either of us," acknowledged Cecil with a laughing bow. They had reached the end of the meadow by this time, and now turned away from the water, sauntering up the slope. "Will you do me a favour?"

Hypatia paused. She had forgotten to pause hitherto, but she did it now with great effect. Her eyes assumed a far-off, puzzled look for a few seconds; then, as though with considerable effort, she promised that she would.

"Then tell me who that lady is over there," said Cecil.

Guy, who had not noticed any strangers, looked in the direction indicated, and saw a lady, whom he certainly did not know, walking with a group similar to their own. She was too far off for her features to be discernible, and all Guy could make out was that

she was prettily dressed, and looked about four-and-twenty. But even that was guesswork.

"That lady?" answered Hypatia, glancing toward her, and then withdrawing her gaze. "She's a new arrival; I think her husband is at Philippa — a professor or reader, I'm not sure which. Their name is Pottifer. Should you like to be introduced?"

"Thanks, much—in hopes that she is pleasanter than her name," said Cecil; while Guy laughed, and said he must be introduced as well. They strolled on until they reached the top of the slope, and then, turning round, enjoyed the gorgeous greenery which lay stretched out before them, and the transparent blue of the clear water as it flowed and glittered in the sunshine. Hypatia was in her glory.

"Do you know," she said very slowly,

after an interval of silence — "do you know, I am strongly tempted to make you both a confession?"

"Yield, then, by all means yield!" cried Cecil, as he threw his slim length upon the grass beside her. "Guy, add your entreaties. A confession from Miss Crewe, of all things——"

His eye met Guy's across her, and there was a moment of horrible danger lest they should laugh audibly. And for that there would have been no excuse, seeing that Hypatia had relapsed into a sort of ecstatic sadness, and now sat gazing away indefinitely into space. Gradually, however, she recovered herself; an almost timid smile came into her eyes, and then she said, in an impressive undertone:

"I've been thinking—of writing——a *novel.*"

"Excellent!" cried both the lads. "And what's it to be about? Where is the scene to be laid?" asked Guy with vivid interest.

"Ah! *Now* you've hit the very point I was coming to," replied Hypatia. "That's just the difficulty; and, do you know, I think you may both be able to advise me, if you will. I've had more than one idea upon the subject; several, in fact; but there were objections to each, and—and——"

"Tell us all about it," said Cecil, rolling himself over, and supporting his chin on his two hands.

"To be frank, then," said Hypatia, "my first idea was to lay the scene in a sphere of Four Dimensions."

"I don't quite understand," stammered Cecil, after a moment of amaze.

"Do you mean to say you don't know

what the Fourth Dimension is?" said Guy with justifiable disdain.

"Oh, I see!" exclaimed Cecil. "But how would you—*work* it?"

"That was just my difficulty," replied Hypatia. "I found it would be necessary first to form some conception of four-dimensional space, then of four-dimensional objects, and, finally, of four-dimensional persons; and I failed—utterly and completely failed. The space I couldn't even imagine. The objects I could contrive to imagine, because we know they must have certain properties; for instance, seeing that planes bound solid figures, solid figures must bound four-dimensional figures; but I can't picture to my mind's eye a 'four-square' object bounded by eight cubes (which is a mathematical necessity), and thus having sixteen points, thirty-two lines, and four-

and-twenty surfaces. Then, again, such an object can only be supposed to move in a direction perpendicular to its three edges; and that, too, I have entirely failed to realize. In short, I'm not a sufficiently good mathematician to deal with the subject, and so I very reluctantly gave up the idea. It was a great disappointment to me, because I believe so implicitly in the actuality of the Fourth Dimension, and I think one is apt to get so tired of living under the cramped conditions of three-dimensional space."

Guy and Cecil murmured expressions of deep sympathy with these views, and fully endorsed Hypatia's dissatisfaction with the restraints of existence generally.

"Well, then I turned my thoughts in another direction," resumed Miss Crewe, more cheerfully. "It seemed to me that fiction dealt too much with subjects of

exclusively human interest, and I thought what a densely populated world there was around us, teeming with life, activity, and intelligence, of which we take scarcely any note whatever. So I decided that I would break fresh ground altogether, and determined that all the characters in my story should be *ants*."

"Aunts?" cried Guy, dumbfounded. "What, *all* of them?"

"My dear Guy," interposed Cecil, reprovingly, "you should learn to think before you speak. *I* understand what Miss Crewe means perfectly. Don't you remember Dr. Somebody's beautiful hymn beginning:

"'These emmets, how small they appear in our eyes'?

It's not so very long ago since you learnt it, I am sure."

Then, Guy having been properly crushed, Hypatia continued her parable.

"Yes," she said, kindling, "I had been reading Sir John Lubbock's illuminating work, and I saw in it at once an entirely new field for the exercise of a cultured fancy. Here we have, at our very feet, a great nation of busy and intelligent beings, versed in the art of war, subject to laws and discipline of the strictest kind, living under an organization which in its social aspects reminds one of our own village communities, engaged in a regularly-organized slave-trade, and able to carry out a variety of public works for the general welfare of the tribe. Clearly, these wonderful creatures occupy a far higher scale in civilization than numbers of savage races that we hear of, and it struck me that I might put all we know about them into the form of a story,

based upon the observations of Sir John Lubbock and other scientific men. Wasn't that an inspiration? But then came the difficulty of the language. It seems clear enough that ants don't talk, but convey their orders, words of command, and ideas generally, by means of their antennæ; and I didn't know how to convey formicular conversation in the antennal vernacular, on paper. So I had to give that up, too."

"What a pity!" exclaimed Cecil. "Still, it would have been difficult to translate the movements of antennæ into English prose. And what was your next idea?"

Hypatia paused; then said, as with an outburst of confidence:

"My next idea was relinquished almost as soon as formed. I thought, for a moment, that I might lay the scene in Atlantis, before the Deluge. Of course,

it's one of my favourite theories that Plato's account of Atlantis in the 'Critias' refers to a real country, and that all the civilizations that have ever existed are derived from reminiscences of that marvellous Island Empire. But the theme was too majestic; I felt crushed before it. It seemed to me that it required the mind of a writer who should unite in himself the genius and learning of all the poets, painters, historians, anthropologists, statesmen, and men of science who ever lived, or ever could have lived; and I therefore shrank from the undertaking as if the very thought of it were sacrilege."

"Well, I think you were a vast deal too modest, then," said Cecil, encouragingly. "I may safely say *I* know nobody who could do greater justice to such a subject than yourself."

Hypatia passed over the compliment with a smile. "At any rate," she said, demurely, "I know of no one who is capable of such a task at all; and I put the idea out of my head at once. Then I had my reward. The conception I have since adhered to rose clear and definite within me."

"And what is it?" cried Guy and Cecil together.

"I have decided to place the scene of my proposed novel in the planet Mars," replied Hypatia, solemnly. "In Mars," she continued, raising her right hand and waving it up and down with a gently didactic air, "in Mars we have a little world that is strikingly like our own. As far as we can discover, it is in the life-bearing period of its existence; it has two moons, and masses of glittering snow at the two poles; while the geographical

distribution of its surface is sufficiently well marked to enable us to localize events. Just look at this, and see if we do not possess all the data we require for the purpose of what I intend to be a social and political romance."

She put her hand in her pocket, and reverently drew forth a beautifully executed map of Mars on Mercator's projection, the seas painted a pale green, the land outlined in dark red, and the various names neatly inserted in ink. The two lads scrambled to their knees, and looked curiously at it from each side of the inspired speaker.

"Now look carefully," said Hypatia, using a small gold pencil-case to point with. "Look at this great land-locked sea, in the middle, divided into two main parts named respectively Dawes and Delarue Ocean. Its shape, you observe,

is something like that of an octopus; did you ever see such extraordinary gulfs and inlets, branching out in all directions like the feelers of some sea-monster? To the south there is a straggling, irregular continent, also divided into two parts, called Lockyer and Cassini; while in the middle of it—just here, you see—are situated two islands, Jacob Island and Phillips Island, separated by the Straits of Arago. South-west of the former, there is a mysterious object, here indicated by a round white spot, which shines with the brilliancy of an Alpine summit, and of which nothing very definite is at present known. Then, to the north of this fantastic sea, there are three more great continents—Herschel, Mädler, and Dawes—with a wide stretch of country to the west, divided into the broad lands known as Kepler and Secchi, with a long, narrow inlet running in a

northerly direction between the two into the Tycho Sea, a fine belt of water which seems to encircle the whole mass of land to the south of it, widening into the Sea of Beer to the east, and insulating the northern mainland, or continent of Laplace, which is bounded, on its north, by the Schröter Sea. Then we come to the regions of perpetual ice; and it is noteworthy that this polar configuration is almost exactly the same as that in the southern hemisphere, where Phillips Sea forms a similar girdle round the base of the Cassini and Lockyer continent, and washes the southern ice-region in its turn. Isn't all this an enchanting relief, after the everlasting Europe, Asia, Africa, and America we've been bored with all our lives?"

"It certainly is the strangest-looking map I've ever seen," said Cecil, really interested.

"What a pity there are no political divisions!"

"No doubt," replied Hypatia; "but that is where imagination must come in. Now just look once more at this collection of sprawling, wriggling, tortuous seas, with their snake-like twists and labyrinthine curves, and think—what is likely to be the international relations of the people inhabiting their shores? Does not the configuration of the land and water make the place a perfect paradise for strategy? Do the Martialists go to war with each other, or are they all one nation under a single king? How do they navigate these sinuous gulfs and bights, or defend their spidery promontories and interminable sea-coasts? Just look at this long, thin, crooked arm of sea, like a huge claw, curling round into the very heart of Dawes continent, and then compare the

great capes of land in Lockyer and Cassini, jutting out into the south-west part of the main central ocean!"

"It certainly looks as though there were no spot on the globe that couldn't be easily reached from any other spot," said Guy, examining the map attentively. "Well, you have found a splendid field to work upon—a new world, ready made to hand, unoccupied, and only awaiting the wand of an enchantress to become the scene of life. Doesn't the thought make you almost dizzy?"

"It overpowers me," replied Hypatia, with a look of rapture. "In fact—I *hope* I'm not profane—but it makes me feel almost like a sort of Creator. Yes, this is my world, and I can do what I like with it. The work of filling in the outlines will probably take me years."

"How shall you begin?" asked Cecil.

Hypatia paused; as well, indeed, she might. But she soon resumed her prolation.

"Well," she said slowly, "the first thing to do will be to form some idea of the Martial scenery. I think I shall adopt the theory that has been ventured by one or two astronomers, that the vegetation in Mars is crimson; and that, of course, will involve a re-arrangement of all the other tints in the landscape, for which a certain study of chromatics will be necessary. Then a description of the heavens, as seen from our new standpoint, will come in; but that need not take very long, only it must not be forgotten that we have two moons in Mars, instead of one. The most attractive and important part of this division of the subject, however, will be a vivid and realistic delineation of the natural scenery of the planet — its dense crimson

forests, its jutting headlands, its interlacing water-ways, the great inland lake just here, you see — in the middle of Laplace — and, above all, the mysterious cone of burning white, that rises Titan-like out of mid-ocean to the south-west of Jacob Island. I ought to be able to make a great deal out of that brilliant speck, of which nothing whatever is known for certain at the present time."

"And how are you going to populate your crimson world?" inquired Guy.

"That is the great difficulty," replied Hypatia. "First, however, I shall divide the continents into countries, and publish explanatory maps—one like this, and the other showing the political divisions. Then arises the crucial question—What political and social institutions shall I portray? What plane in the scale of intellectual life — higher, or lower, than

ourselves—shall the inhabitants occupy? What shall be their personal appearance, their history, their character, their religion?"

"H'm," said Cecil, meditatively. "Much would depend, of course, upon what key-note you adopt. Is it to be satiric, for instance, or didactic, or philosophical? Do you propose to satirize the institutions of earth-life, or create a new world socially and intellectually, as well as physically?"

"It's a tremendous problem," said Hypatia, gazing abstractedly over the sparkling stream to the billowy verdure beyond. "Of course, the configuration of the globe's surface would suggest the introduction of a naval or military element into the story; but that is not what I want. No, I want to present, if possible, the picture of an Ideal Humanity; that is, of men and women as I can conceive they might be if all their latent potentialities were developed

and brought into full play; but at the same time I want to trace their evolution, step by step, from a state of primeval ignorance, and then land them upon a plane of moral, intellectual, and religious development, not only higher than, but essentially different from, anything that we recognise under those names in our own experience. My great fear is lest the task I have set myself is, so far, a logical impossibility."

"There's no doubt that a very compendious mind is required to cope with it," said Cecil; "a combination of Jules Verne and Mr. Black to do the scenery, Laurence Oliphant, Mr. Mallock, and Chunder Sen to undertake the moral and religious part, and a dash of Swift to provide the satire. You must have some satire, Miss Crewe. A romance without satire is as insipid as a salad without onion."

"Satire," pronounced Hypatia, "is a rather dangerous weapon, and is, I am afraid, too closely related to humour. You know I rather object to humour, on principle; it seems so out of place in this world of mysteries—it almost saddens me. But to revert to what we were saying——"

Just then the attention of all three was diverted from the discussion by the sound of excited shouts from the next field. Guy sprang to his feet, and, shading his eyes with one hand, looked hard in the direction of the noise, but was not able to make out much. The bustle, however, continued, and even Hypatia began to be curious to know what was taking place. Then they saw a man push off in a boat, looking for something in the water. The next minute they were all making as fast as they could for the scene of the adventure; and this is what they found.

On the brink of the river, an excited throng; the ladies nervous, eager, and alarmed, the men a little anxious, too, and shouting directions to the man in the boat. Then a cry arose—a cry of satisfaction and relief—as the man in the boat was seen struggling and grappling with some heavy object over the side; and within two minutes the boat was once more alongside the bank, and a dripping, gasping, dishevelled, and generally disorganized gentleman restored, a watery prodigal, to the safe keeping of his friends.

"Oh, my dear Mrs. Pottifer, how thankful you must be!" exclaimed a good-natured-looking lady, turning, almost with tears in her eyes, to a very much younger lady, who seemed the least excited of the whole company. "What a terrible shock it must have given you—for minutes seem like hours when it's a question of life and

death. I do hope the poor Professor won't catch cold."

"He must get rid of his wet clothes somehow," replied the lady addressed, moving a step forward. There was a great hubbub going on, but people ceased chattering, and fell back at once as she approached. "Gregory," she said, addressing the drenched gentleman, who stood shivering and streaming without any apparent idea what to do next, "you'd better go straight on as fast as you can walk to that cottage over there. They're sure to have a fire, and if you give yourself a good rubbing-down at once——"

"I'll go with you, Professor," volunteered one of the young men who stood by. "That's a most practical suggestion of Mrs. Pottifer's. Let's start off before you get a chill."

"And take a nip of brandy!" cried his

wife, with a pretty smile, as Professor Pottifer went waddling and dripping on his way to the cottage. "I am so thankful to you for your kind assistance," she added, turning to the man who had fished him out. "My husband can do most things, I believe, but he is quite unable to take care of himself, and is always having accidents."

"But weren't you dreadfully alarmed?" exclaimed another lady. "I think I should have died if I had seen *my* husband disappear into the water."

"Oh, I'm accustomed to it by this time," answered Mrs. Pottifer, almost laughing at the distracted expression of her interlocutor. "I think there must be a special Providence for the benefit of the helpless; my husband often comes to grief, but somebody always rescues him in time. Please don't let's talk of it any

more. He'll be all right when he's got a change of clothes, and had something or other to prevent him from taking cold."

The gentle decision with which these words were uttered had the desired effect, and Miss Crewe, taking advantage of the opportunity, came forward and addressed a few smiling observations to Mrs. Pottifer, concluding with a request for permission to present to her the two young gentlemen who accompanied her. Mrs. Pottifer, raising her head, displayed a pretty mouth, a clear, creamy complexion, and a pair of soft, bright, violet eyes, which beamed very effectively from under her spreading hat.

"If you please," she said, with a certain shyness in her manner as unconventional as her words. Then the introduction was gone through, and the four fell into an easy walk along the riverside, chatting desultorily the while.

"You have only been at St. Mary's a short time, I think?" said Cecil, who found himself by her side.

"Yes—we only came up this term," replied Mrs. Pottifer, in a voice so soft as to be a little indistinct.

"And, of course, you're in raptures with it already?" pursued Cecil.

"I—I don't often go into raptures," said Mrs. Pottifer, with her head bent down. "Indeed, I'm not expected to—except about seismology."

"I don't quite understand," said Cecil, a little perplexed. "What is—seismology?"

"What my husband's professor of," said Mrs. Pottifer; "don't you know? The science of earthquakes, you know. And, of course, I have to be very much interested in it. I don't think the Professor would approve of my going into raptures about other things; at least, it would seem un-

sympathetic of me, in a way. He is quite devoted to his subject, and I help him in his researches."

"It must be very difficult to go into raptures over earthquakes," put in Guy, with his simple bluntness; "something like speaking disrespectfully of the Equator. I hope your researches don't involve personal experiences—necessarily, at least?"

"Indeed they do!" replied Mrs. Pottifer, with something like indignation. "We went to Japan two years ago expressly to study the waves of motion there, and got all the shocks we could. Unfortunately we weren't in the neighbourhood when those great phenomena occurred in the Straits of Sunda, and, of course, that was a terrible loss; but the Riviera almost made up for it. The Professor had for some time previously been expecting something of the sort there, and as we weren't

far away, happily, we managed to arrive at Mentone almost immediately after the first shock. It was a grand affair, and we both of us enjoyed it beyond words."

"But don't you think it's rather a ghoulish sort of taste?" asked Guy, with a slight accent of disgust.

"Oh, it isn't the suffering we enjoy," replied Mrs. Pottifer, in her soft, grave voice. "We both regret that; we would much rather have the phenomena without the suffering which attends them—indeed we would. But from the standpoint of pure science, you know——"

"Oh, of course—an appeal to science is unanswerable, no doubt," remarked Cecil with a quizzical smile; "I'm devoted to science myself in a way, and I quite acknowledge her claims to be paramount. At the same time, I confess that earthquakes don't enthuse me. I prefer my

science in a milder form—such as botany, for instance. Don't you think I'm right, Miss Crewe?"

Hypatia paused for such an age that Cecil began to think she must have gone off into a trance. At last she said, in a slow, dreamy, yet didactic voice:

"Each science represents some particular ethical truth; and until we discover what that is, in every instance, it is impossible to place the different sciences we know of in the true order of their respective values."

Cecil shrugged his shoulders with a laugh, and turned again to Mrs. Pottifer.

"Well," he said, "seismology may be a very imposing study, but surely botany is more humanizing, and adds more to the sum of human happiness. Besides, it's within reach of everybody: the raggedest child one meets in a country lane is a sort of botanist in its way."

"Is botany your hobby?" asked Mrs. Pottifer.

"Well, I'm rather fond of it," replied Cecil; "it adds an interest to one's country walks, and it's a nice, clean, fragrant sort of thing to take up. Do you know anything of it?"

"Very little, I'm afraid," said Mrs. Pottifer. "Only the names and species of a few common or garden flowers, and things that grow in hedges. I've never studied it seriously at all."

"I wonder whether you could tell me the popular name of this one," exclaimed Cecil eagerly. They had emerged from the field by this time, and Cecil, springing across a grassy ditch which ran along one side of the lane, came back with his hands full of certain small, delicate purple and yellow flowers. "Do you know what these are?"

"Their botanical names?" asked Mrs. Pottifer. "Oh yes; they're——"

"No, no, their country names," said Cecil quickly.

"Indeed, I don't," replied Mrs. Pottifer. "Miss Crewe might, I dare say."

They turned to ask her, but she had fallen some distance behind, and, judging from the gently-impressive movements of her long hands, was treating Guy Miller to a more than usually eloquent apostrophe upon some transcendental theme. To interrupt her on so trivial a pretext, even to deliver Guy, was scarcely to be thought of; so they moved on again, and the next moment descried an exceedingly small, fat, rosy, and begrimed cottage-bairn, about seven years of age, a short way further up the lane.

"There's the very thing we want!" exclaimed Cecil. "That little girl must

be a much better authority on the subject than Miss Crewe. I'll go and interview her."

"Surely you don't like talking to those dirty country children," said Mrs. Pottifer, in her soft, pleading voice. "I can't bear even to go near them; I think they're perfectly disgusting."

"Oh, I'm awfully fond of little children," replied Cecil, simply; "they're so natural, and this one doesn't look so very dirty as they are sometimes. But please don't come nearer than you like, you know."

Mrs. Pottifer thereupon smilingly slackened her pace, while Cecil strode on to where the child was standing. She was clutching in her chubby hands a rough bunch of large field-daisies with stalks of varying lengths, and these she promptly held out to him as he approached, with a view to business.

"No, you can keep those," said Cecil politely. "I don't think I want any daisies to-day, thank you. But, I say, little girl," he continued, showing her the yellow blossoms he was carrying; "can you tell me what these flowers are?"

"Finger-a-fum," replied the child at once.

"Oh, thank you so much," said Cecil, gratefully. "Finger-a-fum—I presume she means fingers-and-thumbs. You're *sure* they're not called eggs-and-bacon?"

The child stared, and then broke into rather a scornful giggle.

"Can't eat 'un," she said, with a gleam of humour in her stolid little fat face.

Cecil, feeling properly humiliated, now produced his spray of purple blossoms.

"And what do you call these, now?" he asked, with a most deferential air.

The child suddenly became quite shy

again; screwed up its mouth, looked vacantly in all directions, as though in quest of inspiration, and then answered, with a jerk:

"Nice flovver."

"What do you say, little girl?" asked Cecil, not quite sure that he had heard correctly.

They made a pretty and rather comic picture—the slender, straight-limbed undergraduate, in his blue-and-white striped blazer and straw hat, tipped over his eyes, gazing benignly down upon the chubby little country-girl with her ragged bunch of weeds, who now, in the embarrassment caused by this unexpected demand upon her botanical lore, began to jog herself about in a sort of cumbrous dance, which had a very ludicrous effect. At last, on Cecil's question being repeated, she said again, with a touch of shy persistence:

"Them's nice flovver."

"And what are these?" asked Cecil, picking a couple of wild narcissus which happened to catch his eye at the moment.

"Them's nice flovver, too," whispered the child, with the guilty air of a detected impostor.

"Ah! I thought so," said Cecil, reflectively. "Nice flovver is evidently a generic term for all botanical specimens she has not yet classified. Well, thank you, little girl; see, there's a penny for you."

The next moment she had disappeared, and Mrs. Pottifer, who had purposely loitered on the way, now came up in company with Miss Crewe and Guy.

"Well, I hope you have had an instructive lesson?" said Mrs. Pottifer, with her shy smile.

"Most instructive," replied Cecil. "I have learned a little popular botany, and

something of human nature, too—if there is such a science. I wonder how the Professor is getting on?"

"The Professor?" echoed his wife. "Oh! I hope I hadn't forgotten him. He would think it so unsympathetic of me. Should you mind walking in the direction of that cottage?"

"By no means," answered Cecil, edging towards Miss Crewe.

The four began to retrace their steps in the direction indicated, and this time it was Guy who fell to the lot of the fair votary of earthquakes. It struck him as rather strange that Mrs. Pottifer should require reminding of her husband's plight; but then, on the other hand, he reflected sagely that, after all, he was scarcely in a position to judge between these two persons, who were such absolute strangers to him; and besides, there was no novelty,

to Mrs. Pottifer, in her husband getting into scrapes.

"Have you and Urquhart been botanizing?" he said, by way of beginning a conversation.

"Mr. Urquhart has," replied Mrs. Pottifer, in her rather indistinct, soft voice.

"Haven't you, too?" pursued Guy.

"I? Oh no," said Mrs. Pottifer.

A pause.

"Bother the woman!" thought Guy impatiently. "Why can't she say something suggestive? Monosyllabic answers like that don't lead to anything." He cudgelled his brains for a few seconds, and then said:

"You don't care for botany?"

"Not very much," replied the lady, bending her head down till her broad, curling hat hid every vestige of her face.

"What do you care for—besides earthquakes?" continued Guy, determined to make her say something, or die in the attempt.

"I don't know—I don't think I have ever thought about it," she answered vaguely.

"Do you read much?" asked Guy.

"No, not very much," was the hopeless rejoinder.

"Not even novels?" pursued Guy, beginning to feel rather contemptuous.

"I've read 'Caleb Williams'," said Mrs. Pottifer. "But I don't care much for reading."

Guy felt almost nonplussed. He paused a moment, and then said, in his most vindictive mood:

"Perhaps you prefer ancient literature to modern?"

But Mrs. Pottifer turned not a hair.

"I don't feel much interest in either," she replied, in almost inaudible tones. "But I know the Rig Veda pretty well—at least, the Upanishads. I read those before I was married."

"Really?" exclaimed Guy, taken aback. "I've seen a translation of the Vedas, but I wasn't aware——"

"I read them in the original," said Mrs. Pottifer, simply.

Guy coloured, and felt rather foolish.

"Of course I never dreamt you were a Sanscritist," he remarked hesitatingly. "You must be most portentously learned!"

"It has never occurred to me whether I am or not," replied Mrs. Pottifer. "I don't think I am — but what does it matter? I like being rowed in a boat much better. Do you row?"

"Oh yes; we all row up here, more or less," answered Guy carelessly. "Of course

I don't profess to be anything of an oarsman."

This he said, fearing lest the very peculiar person beside him might ask him to take her out in his boat on some future occasion; which he was determined not to do, for he rather disliked Mrs. Pottifer, with her utter lack of conversation, her out-of-the-way scholarship, and her enthusiasm for earthquakes. But he need not have been afraid. Mrs. Pottifer did not appear to heed his disclaimer, but sauntered on, her eyes generally on the ground, though ever and anon glancing up in a furtive manner into Guy's downcast face. They soon relapsed into silence, and it was a decided relief to Guy when they arrived at the cottage where the Professor was being dried, and Cecil and Miss Crewe came up.

They found that the Professor was

visible, but scarcely presentable. He was sitting in the kitchen, close to a large, hot fire, wrapped in two or three great blankets, while, hard by, hung his clothes, steaming profusely. Fortunately he was one of those happily-constituted mortals in whom habitual absence or pre-occupation of mind takes the form of a certain mild resignation, amounting to indifference to one's immediate surroundings; if it was his fate, on this sunshiny spring day, to fall into the river and get transformed into a damp, reeking, helpless bundle while all the rest of the world were enjoying fresh air and healthy exercise, well, it was his fate, and there was an end of it; and so he sat, and steamed, and sipped hot brandy and water (which gave him the hiccups), and moralized about volcanic kinetics and earth-waves to his heart's content.

"Well, and how are you getting on?" asked his wife, as she entered the kitchen, the rest remaining discreetly just outside the door.

The Professor raised his eyes absently, with slightly knitted brows, to his wife's face. "I can't quite remember," he said, hesitatingly. "What was the exact proportion between the velocity of the earth molecules and the wave of shock during those manifestations at Mentone? I must have miscalculated the depth of the seismic focus, I fear; there's a mistake somewhere, and——"

"Mentone?" replied Mrs. Pottifer. "Let me see—788 to 15, I think. But never mind that now. Are you feeling pretty well?"

"I'm rather hot," said the Professor, mildly. "And this brandy seems to produce what I may characterize as a sort

of seismic disturbance in my stomach, which shakes me considerably at intervals. But I have no doubt that this very embarrassing activity will cease ere long, and that in an hour or two I shall be enabled to rejoin our friends."

Miss Crewe now ventured a step forwards, and suggested that perhaps Mrs. Pottifer would like to remain with her husband for the present, while they proceeded on their walk. This arrangement was agreed to, and the three left the cottage, Guy, at any rate, feeling the absence of the Professor's wife rather a relief than otherwise. As they strolled on, Miss Crewe observed:

"She's a pretty woman, isn't she?"

"Yes, I think she is, rather," assented Cecil.

"And has such a pretty name," continued Miss Crewe.

"What is it?" asked Cecil.

"Ianthe," said Miss Crewe. "I am inclined to like her, because she's so different from other people."

"I don't think that's always an advantage," observed Guy. "I can't bear people to be so aggressively eccentric — they always take one at unawares, and one never knows what to make of them. But I don't object to her name so much. It certainly is pretty."

"Oh, I rather like people who have some amount of originality," said Cecil. "It would be frightfully uninteresting if all the folks in the world were cast in the same mould, like so many blancmanges. Take Mrs. Pottifer, for instance. It never occurs to me to think whether I like her or no; but she interests and amuses me, and I believe she would repay study."

Guy did not pursue the subject, and

Miss Crewe was soon extemporizing away about something else in her usual earnest fashion. It was not until the close of the day, when the two lads were walking back to their college through the streets, that Cecil remarked, with a light laugh:

"So you were not struck with the fair Ianthe, it appears?"

"I can't say she interests one particularly," replied Guy.

"She seemed to take to *you* very kindly," laughed the other.

"I saw no signs of it," said Guy. "What on earth do you mean? Why, she scarcely spoke to me at all!"

"You're a very inexperienced person," replied Cecil, with a lofty air. "However, I'm rather glad you don't like her. She might be dangerous to some people, and it's just as well she isn't to your taste."

"What stuff you talk!" said Guy.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONSPIRATORS.

THE warm and sheltered position occupied by Seaborough upon the southern coast made it a favourite resort of visitors with delicate chests, and the 'season' consequently fell in the spring-time, when other seaside places were still uninhabitable by reason of east winds. Within a fortnight, therefore, of the dinner-party at Mr. Gervoise's the streets were already pretty full, and shops, hotels, and lodging-houses were doing a brisk trade. Concerts and lectures succeeded each other gaily at the new Assembly Rooms in High Street, affording

an agreeable opportunity for the display of local talent and the very latest fashions; the sands were crowded with bare-legged children and their nursemaids, listening delightedly now to the drolleries of certain strolling melodists in burlesque costumes, now to the fervent exhortations of the Temperance orator, now again to the 'experiences' of a vociferous Hallelujah maiden, whose shrill apostrophes were punctuated ever and anon by the familiar squeak of a Punch and Judy man; brass bands did their worst in all the quietest squares and streets when not similarly engaged upon the pier, and the dealers in brandy-balls, crochet-work, cheap photographs, illuminated texts, flounced pincushions, cornelian hearts, polished shells, dried seaweed, and such-like *objets de vertu* flourished and throve exceedingly. Fuzzy-haired girls, clothed in scarlet and

other delights, pranced and capered up and down the promenade, with mamma puffing beside them, or Harry, in a straw hat and blue pea-jacket, sucking the top of a big stick; stout City men sat on benches in the sun, struggling to read the newspapers which flapped and banged themselves epileptically about in the south-west breeze; large ladies, remarkable for the fine muscular development of such portions of their anatomy as were visible, were laboriously dragged along the sea-front in well-stuffed Bath chairs, exchanging an occasional word with their acquaintances in a faint and wheezy voice; while blind men, with their long-suffering dogs, street-conjurers, tract-distributors, and ancient mariners with some physical infirmity—all common objects of the sea-shore—made the scene complete. Who has not been to some Seaborough or other, and par-

ticipated in the raptures of its festive 'season'? Who has not gazed benignantly upon the shoving crowd of prosperous Philistines, and with an enthusiasm of humanity welling up in his heart exclaimed: '*Humani nihil à me alienum puto;* are these not all my brothers and sisters?' Who has not felt that the sun shone more genially, that the wind blew more bracingly, that the waves gleamed with a brighter and a diviner blue, as he listened to the loud laugh of Harry and Fanny, or the jest which didn't need a point, so full of innocent mirth was its deviser; or watched the loud colours of Amelia's drapery, and the not less ardent hue of her ample cheek—moralizing upon her artless blandishments, and the calf-love gallantry of her Harry or her Tom? Who, in a word, does not love all his fellow-

creatures? And who, amid such surroundings, would not scout the suggestion which a disagreeable friend might whisper in his ear, that the Indian Ocean does not boast a monopoly of regions where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile?

Well, whatever may be the correct view of the matter—and I suppose the question is one of taste—the pageant did not seem to afford any particular gratification to Mr. Claggett, the lawyer, as he caught an occasional glimpse of it through the windows of his dusty office. But then Mr. Claggett, it must be confessed, was not a very happily-constituted man. He had an essentially discontented temperament, and this constitutional defect had made him not only a Nonconformist, but a political Nonconformist — a Nonconformist who writhed in spirit at the thought of his

social disabilities, and who tormented himself with secret indignation at the calm contempt with which he imagined he was regarded by those who, from sheer laxity and want of intelligence, 'conformed' to an Erastian Church. This made him cynical, and his cynicism, unluckily for those with whom he came into contact, vented itself in pugnacity of a somewhat aggressive type, so that it was often a difficult matter for even his best friends to keep the peace with him. And just now he was in an unusually crusty frame of mind, the cause of which it is one of the objects of this chapter to show forth.

As was truly remarked by Mrs. Searle, when that excellent lady was delivering herself upon the great Boyce question on a recent occasion, Mr. Claggett had not been a member of the Queen Street Chapel for very long. He was, in fact, a

comparatively new arrival in Seaborough, and had only joined the church a few months before the opening of the present history. His position as a professional man had not unnaturally secured him a warm welcome on the part of the deacons and their following, and he fell easily enough into the ranks of the 'Government' party without making himself acquainted with the internal politics of the body he had chosen as his spiritual Zion.

For some weeks all went smoothly enough; eventually, however, the innate captiousness of the new member began to look out for some grievance or excuse for strife, and as he was one of those men who are never happy without a feud, or at peace unless they are fighting, the harmony which had before prevailed among the leaders of the community had more than once been menaced. For instance, it was

not long before Mr. Claggett discovered grave cause for dissatisfaction in the colour of the new pulpit-cushion, which, consisting of rich violet velvet, appeared to him as approaching dangerously near to an imitation of the ornaments adopted by a Church which recognised violet as a hue of peculiar ecclesiastical significance; this failing, he took upon himself to upbraid the minister with respect to his crimson hood —the flaunting of which, Sabbath after Sabbath, in a Nonconformist pulpit, struck him very forcibly as a still more glaring piece of inconsistency and aping of one's oppressors. Then he fell foul of the hymn-book that was in use, declaring that many of the hymns consisted of sentimental doggerel of a distinctively Plotinian tendency. And now he had taken up a very hostile attitude towards the proposed bazaar.

To begin with, he cordially disliked Miss Dabbs, who was the prime mover in the undertaking; which was ungrateful of him, though perhaps not altogether unnatural, seeing that Miss Dabbs had more than once evinced, in her maidenly fashion, a certain liking for himself; and this Mr. Claggett, as an unprotected bachelor and professed misogynist, could not bring himself to forgive. It was only on the previous evening, after the usual monthly prayer-meeting at Mr. Searle's, that the great bazaar question had been again brought up, and at the very moment when Mr. Claggett was preparing a formidable attack upon the entire scheme, that Miss Dabbs had, with an insinuating smile, proposed that he—he, of all men—should be appointed Treasurer. To the consternation of all present, however, Mr. Claggett flatly refused to have anything

whatever to do with it; and so pointed were his remarks upon the subject, that poor Miss Dabbs was quite put out of countenance, and a most uncomfortable impression made upon the whole company. Then Mrs. Searle took up the cudgels for her friend; a battle-royal ensued, in which the lawyer was biting and sarcastic, and the lady irascible and abusive; he kept his temper, she lost hers; and at last the conclave broke up in confusion. By all the laws of consistency, therefore, Mr. Claggett ought to have been in a particularly happy humour in the morning; but although he had succeeded, so far, in making his power felt, he was harassed by an uneasy presentiment that the Searles and Dabbses were too strong for him, and that the advantage he had gained would turn out a Pyrrhic victory.

It was, then, while he was in this

seditious frame of mind that an event occurred which was destined to exercise a very important influence upon the fortunes of Queen Street Chapel; no less an event, in fact, than a visit from Mr. Boyce. It had long been evident to the tailor that the main weakness of the Opposition lay in its want of an influential leader, and he had made a mental note of the obvious lack of cordiality which existed between Mr. Claggett and the chiefs of the Government party. This he determined to turn to his own account, and, as the result proved, he could scarcely have chosen a more favourable moment for making his desired overtures.

"I don't know as you rightly know who I am, Sir," began Mr. Boyce on entering, as he stiffly took a seat and deposited his hat upon the floor beneath it. "But we both sit under the same pulpit, and

I've been a member o' the church for over twenty year—twenty year, Sir, and was a deacon for nearly six. I 'ope, Sir, I'm not takin' no liberty, so to speak, in callin' on you this mornin'; but there is times, Sir——"

"Pray don't say another word, Mr. Boyce," interposed the lawyer, graciously. "I have often seen you in chapel, and heard a good deal about you, too; no more eminent member of the congregation, I am sure—though not occupying so influential a position as you once did, if I understand you rightly."

"That is true, Sir," replied Mr. Boyce, resignedly. "Things was very different once, before our present respected pastor came among us—very different. But it's not for such as me to complain. Them as is little accounted of 'ere below shall be great in the kingdom of 'eaven—the

fust shall be last and the last fust. You're pretty well acquainted with the Rev. Mr. Miller, I make no doubt, Sir?"

"Yes, I know him pretty well," said Mr. Claggett.

"Ah!" sighed Mr. Boyce. "A clever man, Sir—though there is some as can't quite follow 'im in his doctrines. I stick to the old paths—maybe I'm old-fashioned. But things was different years agone, and the Truth can't change, Sir, can it now? Time was when we 'ad the simple Gospel preached to us, and nothing *but* the simple Gospel, and that was good enough for me. Not as I'm bringing any charge against the pastor—far from it. Only it seems to me as the spiritial life o' the church ain't quite what it was, and there is times when the plain teachin' o' the Word's obscured, like—too much explainin' away o' the Truth, and mixin' up o' man's

own spec'lations. When once a man begins to wander outside the plain letter o' the Word, Sir, he goes astray—'e can't 'elp it. I've never seen no good come of it yet, Mr. Claggett, and I don't believe I ever shall."

"H'm," said Mr. Claggett thoughtfully. "And so it really has struck you that our minister is not—exactly—*sound?*"

"Well, I wouldn't 'a putt it into words, Sir," replied Mr. Boyce; "but since you seem to see it in the same light—why, I s'pose there must be somethin' in it. I don't say nothin' against Mr. Miller, though he don't always treat me with all the confidence 'e might; still——"

"I don't think I said it had struck *me* that Mr. Miller wasn't sound," rejoined Mr. Claggett cautiously; "though certainly, now you speak of it, there have been occasions, once or twice perhaps, when

I have felt a little puzzled myself at something he has appeared to say. I haven't known him very long, you see, and perhaps I have misunderstood him."

"Maybe, Sir, maybe," said Boyce, with a cunning look. "And yet, Sir, I 'ad a little talk with 'im in private lately, when he was off 'is guard, like, that opened my eyes considerable. Sir, 'ave you ever tackled 'im on the subject of *inspiration?* Well, I 'ave, and I can tell you, Sir, what 'e said nearly took my breath away. According to 'im, none of us can't tell what part o' the Word's inspired and what isn't except we know Greek! Now just think what that means, Sir. 'E evidently don't think it's all inspired; and if that ain't 'eresy I sh'd like to know what is. And then 'ow's everybody to learn Greek? 'Can't the Almighty teach people in plain English?' says I. And then, Sir, 'e jest

shut up. 'You're a clever man, Mr. Boyce,' says 'e. A man can't get no satisfaction out of 'im — 'e ain't straightforward, seems to me. And then what with all these new-fangled chants and anthems, and this 'ere foolish and ungodly bazaar as they're gettin' up——"

"Ah!" interposed Mr. Claggett, raising his eyebrows, "you're opposed to the bazaar, are you?"

"I am, Sir, on many grounds," said the tailor, who had already taken his man's measure pretty accurately. "You think different, no doubt. I don't want to press my views on such as you, but——"

"Not at all, not at all," said Mr. Claggett, quickly; "I am opposed to the bazaar myself. But then, as regards Mr. Miller, I'm not sure that he cares for it any more than I do. In fact, to do him justice,

I've heard him speak rather disparagingly of it than otherwise."

"Then why don't 'e putt a stop to it?" retorted Boyce. "The fact is, Sir," said the tailor, assuming a mysterious look and bending his head significantly forward, "the fact is, 'e's just in the 'ands o' the women. The ladies o' the congregation does what they likes with 'im, and mark me, Sir, when a pastor gets into the 'ands o' the women it's a bad look-out for 'is general usefulness. 'Twere a bad thing for Mr. Miller when 'is wife died. 'E 'asn't been the same man since. Ah, she kept 'im straight, she did. There warn't no Mrs. Searles and Miss Dabbses a-caperin' round 'im then, turnin' 'is 'ead with their flatteries and makin' a fool of 'im in the sight o' God and man," concluded Mr. Boyce, vindictively.

"It's always as well not to mention

names, Mr. Boyce," remarked the lawyer drily. At the same moment, however, there arose before his mind's eye a vision of the equine visage and apple-green skirts of the deacon's wife frisking in an insane dance around the dignified presence of the minister, and he had to bite his underlip somewhat severely to keep himself from smiling. "Of course you understand that I'm a —in fact—a friend of Mr. Miller's, and I should be sorry to think that he was either lax in doctrine or susceptible of undue influences." And yet, somehow or other, the insinuations of Mr. Boyce were not altogether ungrateful to him. Boyce watched him narrowly, and saw that his words had not been without their effect. He waited for a moment; then, with an air of much deprecating candour, observed:

"Very true, Sir—very true indeed. It

would be a pity, as you say. There's nothin' so bad as favouritism in a minister o' the Gospel, and I dare say I've judged 'im too 'arshly. We sh'd always putt a favourable construction upon the very wust actions as long as we can. I shouldn't wonder, now, if 'e 'ad some good reason for settin' upon *me* as 'e do—shouldn't wonder a bit. 'E's dead against my takin' the lead in our exposition class, you know—just as though I 'adn't got the Bible at my fingers' ends, so to speak. Yet, no, he won't 'ave it; won't 'ear of it. Well, now, 'e must 'ave a reason for that; let's do 'im so much justice, at any rate. But what *is* the reason? That's what I'm a-tryin' to find out."

"Is it possible he cannot consider you qualified?" suggested Mr. Claggett, pluming himself upon having hinted the actual truth in a particularly neat manner.

"He may putt it like that to himself, Sir," answered the tailor, his small eyes sparkling with excitement, "but other folks can see it different. Mr. Claggett, Sir, I likes plain speakin', and the simple fact is that 'e's departed from the simplicity o' the Gospel, and can't a-bear them as is still content with the written Word. 'E reads 'Uxley, and Darwin, and unbelievers o' that sort, Mr. Claggett; I've 'eard 'im myself deny that the world was created in six days six thousand years ago by the fiat of Almighty God, as the Bible says it were; 'e don't believe in the election o' grace neither, not in the true Script'ral sense, that is; and 'e don't preach the Truth. 'Ow can the cause flourish when the very man as ought to be a burnin' and a shinin' light lets his lamp go out for want of oil? 'Ow can 'e expect any ingatherin' o' souls? Mr. Claggett, Sir, 'ave we never

read o' them as won't enter in themselves, and seeks to 'inder others from enterin' in as wants to? Jest apply that passage to Mr. Miller and this 'ere Scripture exposition class. When it's a question o' studyin' the Word o' God under one as knows it a'most by 'eart, experimentally as well as literally, 'e opposes it tooth and nail; but when it comes to people with immortal souls a-wastin' their time in making a cargo o' knicknacks and rubbish, and then a-playin' at shop to pay off a debt as ought never to 'ave been incurred, why 'e allows it if 'e don't encourage it."

Mr. Claggett coughed, frowned, and felt rather at a loss what to reply.

"Well, Mr. Boyce," he said at length, "you put the case very strongly—too strongly altogether, let us hope; but certainly there seems some truth in what you say. It is a matter that requires to be

thought over. In the meantime, perhaps it would be as well not to mention to any other person that we have had this conversation."

"Don't say another word, Sir," said the delighted tailor, seeing that he had gained the object of his visit, and too shrewd to spoil his game by over-doing it. "Don't say another word, Mr. Claggett. It's clear as we feels alike about this matter, and we're not the only ones, Sir—not by a long way. I won't take up your time any more now, Sir; you're a busy man, I know. It's beautiful weather, ain't it?" added Mr. Boyce, smoothing his hat with his elbow, preparatory to his departure. "And the town's wonderful full: I never see it fuller. Well, good day, Sir—good day, and thank you for your patience wi' me." And then Mr. Boyce went out.

"Really," mused Mr. Claggett, when he

found himself alone again, "the man seems very intelligent—very intelligent indeed. Not much education evidently; but with excellent natural parts. Positively, now, I shouldn't wonder a bit if Miller did turn out a trifle unsound; it always struck me he hadn't quite the true ring about him, and he's certainly wanting in tact—sadly wanting, I'm afraid. By the way, I wonder what Boyce can have meant by saying he was under the thumbs of the women? Surely——"

Just then a very strange thing occurred. By the merest chance Mr. Claggett happened to look out of the window, and there, amid the gay throng upon the Esplanade, he saw a lady and gentleman in animated conversation. The lady was talking effusively, every now and then glancing up in her companion's face with an expression of the keenest interest;

while the gentleman appeared to be listening with a sort of good-humoured indulgence, every now and then putting in a word which only served to set the lady off again with redoubled vehemence. It needed no second glance to assure the lawyer that there might, after all, be something in Mr. Boyce's hint.

"It does look rather bad!" exclaimed Mr. Claggett, as he watched Miss Dabbs and Mr. Miller disappearing among the crowd. "A man has no right to go flaunting about the town like that—a man in his position. As for the woman, I believe she'd extort a promise of marriage from the Pope of Rome."

This was a most indefensible remark, for poor Miss Dabbs's attentions had always been of an extremely innocent nature, and nobody had ever dreamt of accusing her of designs upon the minister, however

amiably disposed she may have shown herself towards her ungrateful critic. But Mr. Claggett was in an unusually seditious mood, and his conversation with Mr. Boyce had gone far towards accentuating his antagonism to the minister and all his adherents.

Then the lawyer sat down at his desk, lighted a large cigar, and plunged into a fit of meditation. There was probably no doubt, he thought to himself, that Mr. Miller's views would not stand examination. He had had several misgivings already, and now they were more or less confirmed. There was an air of cynicism, too, about the minister which scarcely commended itself to the judgment of a Christian man; an air of cynicism, repeated Mr. Claggett, combined with a certain lofty disregard of the feelings and views of others, especially repugnant to the feel-

ings of so humble-minded and tender-hearted a church-member as—as himself. And it was certainly beyond question that the minister was imprudent. To let the women make a tool of him in the matter of the bazaar was an evidence of weakness, but to exhibit himself in public as the led Captain of a frivolous, husband-hunting old maid was surely the very height of indiscretion, and it would be well, thought Mr Claggett, if someone were to remonstrate with the minister in plain terms.

The unconscious pastor, meanwhile, was walking briskly along by the sea-shore, sniffing up the pure salt air with keen enjoyment, and wondering how he could shake off Miss Dabbs. As it happened, he was by no means in a humour to appreciate Miss Dabbs on that particular morning; he was, in point of fact, meditating another article for the *Spectator* upon

'Political Antinomianism the Root of the Socialistic Theory,' and the incessant flow of Miss Dabbs's invertebrate chatter was a sore trial to him. It was just before Mr. Claggett had caught sight of him through the dusty office-window that he had himself caught sight of Mr. Boyce, with brisk and buoyant step, coming out of the lawyer's office-door; and the incident stirred him to a sort of lazy amusement and wonder. What did the lawyer want of the tailor, or the tailor of the lawyer? Was Mr. Boyce about to make his will? Or had Mr. Claggett been getting measured for a new suit of clothes? Then Miss Dabbs burst in upon him again with a fresh volley of remarks, and the momentary interest passed away. But of the true nature of the colloquy between the two church-members the Rev. Robert Miller had no suspicion, and the next

moment had almost forgotten that any such occurrence had taken place.

The crowd upon the Esplanade grew denser and denser, the brass bands brayed louder and louder, and Miss Dabbs grew more and more voluble. At last the minister could bear it no longer, and determined that, come what might, he would get rid of his encumbrance. He glanced round, but saw nobody he knew. There were no chairs vacant near him — and, indeed, if there had been, he scarcely saw how he could utilize them. Then he turned his eyes seawards; and immediately the inspiration came.

"Surely that's old Mrs. Philpott, isn't it?" said Mr. Miller, indicating an elderly bathing-woman, whose machine happened to be empty. "I think you've mentioned her to me once or twice as a very

promising member of your Counterpoint Society."

"Yes, indeed, I've great hopes of her," replied Miss Dabbs unsuspectingly. "She wasn't at the last meeting, though; I almost think——"

'Wasn't she, indeed?' rejoined the minister, with sudden energy; "oh, that won't do—she must be spoken to. No time like the present." Whereupon he descended the wooden steps that led to the beach, and allowed Miss Dabbs to precede him to where the old bathing-woman was standing. Then he fell a few steps in arrear, only coming up in time to hear the old woman say in a loud, strident, cheery voice:

"'Mornin', ma'am! Beautiful mornin' for a dip! Sea's just as warm as warm, and a machine waiting!"

"Oh, so you're going to have a bathe,

are you?" exclaimed Mr. Miller, with a courteous smile, affecting not to notice poor Miss Dabbs's bewildered look. "I envy you—sea-bathing doesn't agree with me. Well, don't let me keep you, pray; you have a lovely morning for your bath"—and, raising his hat, the unblushing hypocrite turned quickly on his heel, not daring to cast a glance behind, to see whether Miss Dabbs was safely ensconced in the machine or no. Satisfied, at any rate, that he was free, the minister sprang lightly up the steps again, and resumed the thread of meditation that Miss Dabbs had so ruthlessly interrupted. At last his thoughts ran clear. "'Political Antinomianism'—a most admirable phrase: epigrammatic and expressive in the extreme. The connection between this and Socialism: obvious, of course, and suggestive of much striking and even

picturesque illustration. Fallacies of the Socialistic theory: start every man on an equality with a hundred pounds in his pocket to-morrow—would that equality be still existing a twelvemonth afterwards? Capital and labour: evident that no increase in the wealth of any class can be really permanent unless all classes gain together. The science of political economy founded upon axioms of mathematical exactitude. Chief sophistries to be controverted: the ascription of infallibility to numbers, the repudiation of all law or principle not emanating from the democracy, and the belief that, while other trades and professions require a long apprenticeship, all men are born politicians. Furthermore——"

Here the minister threw his head back with a benignant smile, gave his walking-stick a triumphant twirl, and prepared

to launch out into the following portion of his subject. At this moment, however, he became conscious that somebody was bearing down upon him from the other side of the way. He glanced quickly in the direction of the advancing figure, and the next moment found himself the helpless prisoner of Mr. Claggett.

"Good morning, Mr. Miller," croaked the lawyer, in a curiously aggressive tone of voice. "A fine day for those who have nothing better to do than to take their pleasure," he added, disagreeably. "It isn't often I'm able to leave *my* desk; rain or sunshine, I'm generally hard at it, I can tell you."

"Then I must congratulate myself that to-day is an exception with you, Mr. Claggett," replied the minister, with a smile.

"Humph!" rejoined the lawyer, crustily.

"Well, perhaps it *is* just as well that we've met. I want to speak to you. It may have struck you that I was a little abrupt last night at Searle's?"

"You certainly did not conceal your opinions," said Mr. Miller.

"No, I don't think I did," said Mr. Claggett. "And I don't see that there was any necessity for my doing so. I want it to be distinctly understood that I'm opposed to this precious scheme of the women for raising funds; opposed to it tooth and nail, on very many grounds; and that I'm sorry it has your support. I've hinted this already, and now I want to say it, and to say it as emphatically as I can."

"It seems to me you are making a great deal out of a very little, my dear Mr. Claggett," replied the minister, bracing himself for the contest. "We have a

debt of nearly five hundred pounds upon the chapel, and debts have to be paid. What is your objection to a bazaar? It certainly is the easiest and most agreeable way of ridding ourselves of an encumbrance, and as these good ladies are so eager about it, let us accept their services and be thankful. I confess that I personally do not care about such things. There is, of course, a certain amount of bustle and frivolity about them that is not to my taste. But then, the whole responsibility of it will be virtually taken off my hands, and we shall realize enough to pay off the greater part of the debt, if not the whole of it. Besides, there's no use in making one's self unpleasant. Why should I oppose a harmless enterprise that will give pleasure to so many worthy people, and redound in such advantage to us all?"

"That's all very well, that's all very well," said Mr. Claggett, argumentatively. "But in the first place, popularity may be bought too dear." The minister flushed, and drew himself up unconsciously. "Secondly, there's something decidedly unseemly in a parcel of young women playing at shop, and indulging in a lot of frivolous and vulgar banter in a public place; yes, Sir, banter—*I* know what goes on at fancy-fairs; and if this is unseemly in itself, it's worse than unseemly when done in the so-called interests of religion. What's the position of affairs, put plainly? The worship of Almighty God in our chapel is prejudiced and hampered for want of five hundred pounds. To remove the disability, you propose to allow a public exhibition, in which young girls shall sell threepenny cigars at a shilling each, or eighteen-pence if they bite the

end off; cheat honest people by getting them to put into lotteries where there are no prizes; extort money by pretending to be fortune-tellers, and receiving young men in a darkened room all alone——"

"Mr. Claggett!" exclaimed the minister, red with anger.

"Don't I know what I'm talking about?" almost roared the lawyer in his excitement. "I tell you it is so. I was present at one of these abominable shows once, and speak from experience. I asked a girl in the refreshment-stall for a cup of coffee—price sixpence. As she handed it to me, Sir, the impudent hussy had the brass to take a sip out of it herself first, and then asked me double the price! 'Give me a clean cup,' I said, 'and try and behave more decently in the future.' I tell you, Mr. Miller, if that young woman could have murdered me without danger to her own

neck, she'd have done it. Ah, that she would. And that's the sort of thing you permit and encourage! Heaven and earth, Sir, if the chapel debt can only be paid off by such organized imposture and indecency as that, then let us take our chance. The debt ought never to have been incurred, to begin with; it's too late to talk much about that now, of course, but it should be a severe lesson to you for the future. For a church like ours to incur liabilities it can't discharge, and then resort to such nefarious methods as this proposed bazaar to wheedle money out of the people, is neither more nor less than a disgrace."

Mr. Claggett spoke in a loud, harsh, grating tone which was almost as irritating to his listener as the words he uttered; a network of wrinkles gathered round his nose—a peculiarity of that feature when its owner was excited, or in a thoroughly

bad humour—and he bobbed his head fiercely backward and forward as he walked. For a minute or so Mr. Miller made no reply. His temper was naturally quick and a trifle despotic, and he found it necessary to put a strong curb upon his tongue. At last he said, rather indifferently :

"Well, I'm sorry we don't see the matter quite in the same light, Mr. Claggett. I won't deny that there is something to be said against bazaars, and that in any case they require to be very carefully organized ; but I think you very greatly exaggerate the evils, and in this particular case I don't care to assume an attitude of opposition to nearly my whole congregation. It is necessary," he added, after a pause, "for the incumbent of such a post as mine to conciliate all parties if possible. The harmonious working of a church is far more

dependent than you may think upon a judicious policy of compromise and conciliation."

"Conciliation!" snapped the lawyer, in a high key. "Then why don't you conciliate all the malcontents? There are enough of them, it appears."

"Mr. Boyce, for instance," suggested the minister, mischievously.

"Certainly," replied Mr. Claggett, accepting the challenge at once. "Mr. Boyce is the very man I was thinking of. I don't at all understand the dead set you all make against him. To me he appears a very excellent, well-meaning fellow, and very, very far from being a fool. I always judge of a man as I find him, and that's my opinion of Boyce. Well, have you tried your conciliation policy on him? And if not, why not?"

"How often have you spoken to Boyce?" asked Mr. Miller, quietly.

"I——" the lawyer hesitated. Then, before he could frame a satisfactory answer, the minister went on:

"I think you have only spoken to him once; and that was twenty minutes ago, in your own office. The man has evidently made the impression upon you that he wished to, and was so pleased with the result of his interview that his elation was actually visible from the opposite side of the parade."

Mr. Claggett's rather sallow complexion assumed a reddish tinge at this totally unexpected thrust, and for a moment a sensation of mingled anger and humiliation kept him silent. At last he said, very stiffly:

"It is certainly true that Mr. Boyce called at my office this morning; but I was not aware that we were being watched."

"I only saw him, by accident, as he was

coming out," laughed the minister, pleasantly, "and if I thought about it at all I hoped you had been giving the poor man an order for some clothes. I am glad you like him, however; he does not always make an agreeable impression, and I confess that I personally find him very difficult to get on with."

"Well," rejoined Mr. Claggett, cantankerously, "my opinion is that it would be in the interest of both yourself and the church if you tried to get on with him rather better. The man has a following, and, as I said before, is very far from a fool. You mayn't like him, but plain truth is an important thing in this world, and plain truth is what you'll never get from friends and flatterers. Now, from what Boyce tells me, there are numbers of people in the congregation who have been very much disturbed by some of

the doctrines you preach. They say, freely enough among themselves, that your teachings are unscriptural: that you don't believe in the election of grace, and that your views of inspiration are unorthodox; and all this is doing you a great deal of harm. I only tell you what I hear—I don't say anything about it myself, only I think you ought to know the facts.'

"You're more than kind," replied the minister, as Mr. Claggett came to an abrupt stop. "But I really think we needn't trouble ourselves much about the matter. I know Boyce better than you do; he is a strangely ignorant man, and while I regret his opinions on many subjects I know that it is of no use trying to teach him better. In fact, you can't teach people some things unless they have a certain amount of education, and this poor Boyce has not. The only thing to

be done is to keep him as much as possible from doing mischief.'

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Claggett, with a sort of snap. "So that's the way you take it. Well, I suppose you're the best judge of your own interests; and it's not for me to interfere. I've warned you, and there's an end of it. Don't blame me if you find yourself in trouble some of these fine days—that's all."

"Are you threatening me, Mr. Claggett?" asked Mr. Miller, with a puzzled look.

"No, Sir, I'm not threatening you," retorted the lawyer. "Threatening's actionable, and I never do anything actionable, you may be sure. I only tell you that, in my humble opinion, you're driving straight upon the rocks with your eyes open; and that, if you don't take in sail, you'll come to grief. Good day."

And Mr. Claggett was half-way across

the street before the minister had fully realized that his scolding had come to an end. What did it all mean? To Mr. Miller, high-minded, intellectual, and *tant soit peu* exclusive, the petty cabals of his congregation were less than uninteresting —they were utterly frivolous and contemptible. A man who has 'views' on political antinomianism, and has begun to apply the Darwinian theory to the history of constructive ethics, can scarcely be expected to feel much interest in the stupidities of a conceited tailor, or the impertinence of a meddlesome lawyer, or even the effusiveness of a still marriageable lady. And yet—and here the half-disquieting, half-whimsical reflection would again arise—yet, he was the pastor of their souls; their very follies, ignorances, disagreeableness, were his business; he was, in a certain (though he hoped, limited)

sense, responsible for their eternal welfare; and he was supposed to be looking forward to a supreme occasion when, surrounded by Mr. Claggett, Mr. Boyce, Miss Dabbs, and Mr. and Mrs. Searle, he would be able to exclaim, "Lo, I and the children which Thou hast given me." The utter incongruity of such ideas with the general bent of his mind startled, perplexed, and worried him. Something was wrong. That was clear enough. But what? Was he the wrong man for his position? Had it been a mistake from the outset? Were he and his congregation at cross-purposes? And if so, which party was in fault?

"Ah, Miller!" said a genial, friendly voice in his ear. It was Dean Sherborne, the Broad Church hierophant of the Cathedral in a neighbouring town. And as the little Dean linked a sympathetic

arm in that of the pensive minister, a sense of fellowship came over his whole being that was very grateful to him. He felt that here, at least, he was with an equal; and for the remainder of his morning's walk he managed, with the Dean's assistance, to forget his worries in a delightful argument on Predisposition as a Factor in Religious Variance.

CHAPTER VII.

DANGER AHEAD.

MEANWHILE, Guy, all unconscious of the tea-cup storms that were raging around his parent, pursued the tenor of his college life in happy equanimity. He had taken a good class in Honour Mods the previous March, and, as he was not going in for Finals before the next June twelvemonth, was now slacking a bit, preparatory to the last sustained effort which should launch him a full-blown B.A. It thus happened that he was frequently upon the river, and was often to be met at those social gatherings which, since the toleration of married

Fellows, had become so prominent a feature in University existence; for Guy was a popular lad, agreeably intelligent without a touch of priggishness, and his merry smile and simple manners made him a general favourite in society. It must be confessed, too, that he was often brought into contact with Mrs. Pottifer; and, although he would have denied indignantly that he liked her one whit better than any of the other ladies of his acquaintance, there is no doubt that, as he grew accustomed to her, he became more reconciled to her peculiarities. For there could be little question that Mrs. Pottifer had taken a decided liking to him; she invariably accorded him a bright glance of recognition whenever they chanced to meet, and, while he gave her no encouragement whatever, it was impossible for a lad of his age to be either uncon-

scious of her preference or indifferent to her advances. Hitherto, however, her bearing towards him had not been such as to cause him any embarrassment, and he allowed himself to drift along in a pleasant, heedless fashion, entirely unsuspicious how dangerously near he was verging to the primrose path.

"Miller, what'll you smoke?" said a youth rejoicing in the name of Reginald Stuart, to whose rooms Guy, with some half-dozen others, had repaired for 'dessert' one evening after hall. The entertainment consisted of a few dishes of oranges and dried fruits, which nobody touched, port, sherry, and claret, which were pretty extensively patronized, a tray of coffee for those who cared for it, and two or three thick, brown, earthenware jars of tobacco.

"Thanks, I've brought my pipe," replied

Guy, pulling a well-coloured meerschaum from his pocket, and stuffing it carefully. "Anything new to-night?"

"Not that I've heard of," replied his host, setting the decanters in motion. "Have some claret?"

"Claret and tobacco!" exclaimed Guy, with fine scorn. "No, thanks; I'll have a glass of port."

"What's your objection to claret and tobacco?" asked a rather heavy-looking young gentleman, who answered to the name of Vicars.

"The same that I have to codfish and raspberry jam; the flavours don't agree," replied Guy, sipping his port with a self-satisfied air. "There are some men, I dare say, who'd eat oranges with Château Margaux; well, I wouldn't. Of course, I may be fastidious."

"I don't mind how I mix things so long

as they're good and I get enough of 'em," remarked Vicars, helping himself to some sherry. "Has anybody heard how the football went off this afternoon?"

"A tie, I believe," said De Cordova, a lazy-looking, rather swarthy youth in a conspicuous crimson scarf. "Somebody put his collar-bone out too, I heard."

"Who was that?" asked Stuart.

"A man named Tiverton, of St. Ambrose," said Vicars. "And a fellow capsized himself somewhere near the Willows, but I believe he was fished out all right."

"Who was he? I was on the river, but didn't see anything of it," observed Carteret, a man who had not spoken before.

"Oh, no one in particular; a tosher, I was told," replied Vicars, indifferently. "Fellows have no right to go out in those whiffs unless they can swim."

"I heard he was run down by a centre-board," remarked Pinkerton, a somewhat sickly-looking lad who sat rather apart from the others, and preferred black coffee to any of the wines provided. Mr. Pinkerton was not a particularly popular man; his manners were too exclusive to make him much of a favourite with his fellows, and there was a *soupçon* of conceit and priggishness about his air which rather spoilt him. But he was undeniably clever, with a talent for poetry which bade fair to ensure him the prize in the next competition, and which he himself was not by any means disposed to undervalue.

"By the way, have you noticed how ill old Potty looks?" asked Stuart, turning to Guy Miller.

"No," said Guy, vaguely. "I haven't seen him I don't know when."

"Is that the old chap who tumbled into

the river some weeks ago?" asked De Cordova, relighting his pipe. "Goes in for earthquakes, and got rather a pretty wife?"

"That's the man," answered Stuart. "I suppose he got a chill, or a shock, or something. Anyhow, he's looking awfully seedy now. I thought you knew them very well, Miller?"

"Pretty well," said Guy, awkwardly. "I meet them out a good deal, but I'm very seldom at their house."

This was true enough. He had only known them a few weeks, and had not been to the house more than twice; but he had met them, or one of them, every other day in one place or another, and had, in fact, been having tea in Mrs. Pottifer's company the previous afternoon.

"What does an old dried-up stick like that want with a young wife?" blurted out Mr. Vicars, rather abruptly.

"Better ask him," murmured De Cordova, lounging back in his low chair and smoking lazily.

"The question to my mind," put in Carteret, "is rather what a good-looking young woman can want with a dry old stick like Potty. They can't be much in the way of companions to each other, I should think."

"Oh, aren't they, though!" exclaimed Guy, in the importance of his superior knowledge. "Why, she knows almost as much about earthquakes as he does, and takes no end of interest in them. You should just hear her talk about azimuths, and vibrations, and earth-waves; she's got it all as pat as the alphabet. And she knows Sanscrit, too. She's——"

"Oh, spare us the rest of her accomplishments!" cried Stuart, knocking the ashes out of his pipe. "Of all monstrosi-

ties, I do think a learned woman is the most indefensible. I'd as soon marry a woman with a beard."

"Well, but she doesn't give one the impression of a learned woman," said Guy. "There's nothing of the blue-stocking about her. She doesn't parade her learning a bit; in fact, her manners are almost childish at times. I think I rather like her, though she never seems to have much conversation, and it's a trifle difficult every now and then to keep the ball rolling."

"Why, I thought you and she were as thick as thieves," said Vicars, in his abrupt way. "How often have I seen you in the Park with her, I should like to know? Half-a-dozen times, I'll swear."

Guy coloured, and told Vicars not to talk rot.

"Oh, *I've* no objection," retorted that gentleman, pouring himself out a glass of

port, and gnawing a large bunch of raisins. "No more has old Potty, I suppose. Where's Urquhart, by the way?"

'Dining with the Provost," answered Guy, as he refilled his pipe. "Sooner he than I; I can't bear that sort of entertainment. One never has the faintest chance of a smoke afterwards, either."

"Does Pottifer smoke?" asked Stuart.

"I don't know," said Guy, curtly.

"Does his wife?" inquired Vicars, with a laugh.

Guy hesitated.

"Well," he said, reluctantly, "if you call an after-dinner cigarette 'smoking,' I'm afraid she does—when she can get one. But nothing more, I assure you."

"Nothing more!" echoed Stuart, in disgust. "I only wonder she doesn't take to colouring meerschaums. Knows Sanscrit, and smokes! Such a woman ought to be

buried alive. I suppose it *was* you who coloured that pipe of yours, Miller? Upon my word, it all looks uncommonly suspicious."

Guy coloured again, and requested Stuart not to be an ass.

"Well," said Carteret, "I don't see why a woman shouldn't learn Sanscrit if she likes. Fifty years ago it was considered unfeminine for a girl to do anything but work samplers and read Miss Edgeworth's Moral Tales; what would people have said to the girls at Martineau Hall in those days? It's nothing but a fashion. Queen Elizabeth and Lady Jane Grey were learned enough in all conscience, and no one thought any the worse of them."

"But they didn't smoke cigarettes," said Stuart.

"Who did, then?" rejoined Carteret.

"I believe Elizabeth to have been equal to a pipe, if smoking had been in fashion."

Guy, not caring to pursue the subject, here rose from his seat, and went to the table to replenish his glass. He then, instead of resuming his chair, sat down on the other side of the room, where Pinkerton was, and began a desultory conversation with the poet in an undertone.

"Were you on the river this afternoon?" he asked, without caring very much whether he had been or not.

"I was walking by it," replied Mr. Pinkerton, in a tone of melancholy reserve. "I never row."

"Oh," said Guy, not knowing very well how to proceed.

"I rather dislike crowds," resumed the poet, in his constrained way. "They are noisy, and—and—unappreciative."

Guy laughed a little at that, and said:

"Of course, it all depends upon one's mood. I dare say that crowds, in the abstract, are a bit philistine. Still, one doesn't care always to be alone."

"*I* generally am," replied Mr. Pinkerton. "And never more so than when in a crowd."

"Well," returned Guy, "I suppose everyone prefers to choose his own associates. You're not 'alone' in that sense, I take it. You have your own set, of course."

"My own 'set'?" repeated Mr. Pinkerton, with the ghost of a smile.

"Well, your own friends, then," said Guy.

"Friends," echoed Mr. Pinkerton, pensively. "Yes—I suppose I have 'friends,' of a sort. But I have not yet found my Hallam."

Guy stared, tried to look sympathetic,

and then smiled broadly. Evidently he was in the presence of the future Laureate. Just then, Vicars called out:

"Miller! Here's somebody wants you."

A scout had that moment entered, and stood holding in his hand a note addressed to Guy Miller, Esq., Muriel College, in a bold, peculiar, characteristic hand. Guy took it, glanced at the superscription, bit his lip, and then thrust it carelessly into his breast-pocket.

"The person is waiting for an answer, Sir," said the scout.

Guy thereupon pulled the missive out again, and, with the worst grace in the world, began to read it. A barely perceptible smile broke out upon his lips as he took in the contents, while a warm blush mounted to his brow. These marks of emotion were not lost upon Stuart, Vicars, and De Cordova, who exchanged

winks and nudged each other with considerable enjoyment of the situation.

"Don't go, Miller," exclaimed Stuart, mischievously. "I've some beautiful cream-laid paper here—scented with musk, too. Sit down and write the answer where you are."

"No, thanks," said Guy, hastily. "I think I'll go over to my own rooms. Don't bother—I shall be back directly."

But Guy was not back directly. He walked swiftly across the quad, reached his quarters, turned up the lamp on his table, and then, sinking into a low, soft arm-chair, read the letter through once more. It ran thus :

"Dear Mr. Miller,

"I dare say you have heard that my husband is unwell. He has never been quite himself since his immersion

some weeks ago—do you remember that memorable day? I shall never forget it—and has not taken as much care of himself since as he should have done. So I am not very lively, as you may suppose. Won't you come and see me to-morrow afternoon about five o'clock? I don't expect any other visitors, as my day, you know, is Monday.

"Ever yours sincerely,

"IANTHE POTTIFER.

"*Thursday Evening.*"

Guy frowned, and wondered, and then smiled a little as he squirmed uneasily in his chair. Was this young woman making a dead set at him? It looked rather like it. And yet he didn't care for her—at least, not particularly. Well, there was no use in being prudish. Why shouldn't he pay her a visit to-morrow afternoon?

So he drew his writing-case towards him, pulled out a sheet of note-paper, and wrote his answer.

"DEAR MRS. POTTIFER,

"Of course I shall be delighted to come and see you to-morrow at 5 p.m. I am awfully sorry to hear the Professor is unwell. I do hope you have not been over-exerting yourself in your attendance upon him.

"Believe me,

"Yours most truly,

"GUY MILLER."

"There!" said Guy to himself, as he put this highly proper epistle into an envelope, and delivered it to the messenger; "I think that will do nicely. Hope she won't take the sentence about over-exerting herself as an insinuation;

not that I care very much if she does, anyhow."

Then he stuffed his pipe again, lighted it, and threw himself back in his easy-chair, puffing pensively for some time. Was it his fancy, he wondered, or was it the actual fact, that he had found favour in the eyes of this Professor's wife? We remember how and when they first met. Mrs. Pottifer had almost entirely failed to interest him; nay, he had found her rather irritating, and she had annoyed him by her apparent lack of conversational power, and the peculiar reserve which characterized her slow, hesitating speech. And yet it seemed that, ever since that day, fate or chance had persisted in throwing them together; while it was undeniable that Mrs. Pottifer herself had taken the fullest possible advantage of her opportunities. There was a strange charm

about her, too; her violet eyes were adorable, and the calmly, almost imperceptibly, steady way in which she always contrived to monopolize his conversation and society whenever they happened to meet was noteworthy—perhaps, even, not altogether unpleasant. But what the link between them could be was a sore puzzle to innocent Guy. She was wrapped up in earthquakes, a phenomenon he neither knew nor wished to know anything about. She was familiar with the Rig Veda, a venerable document the very name of which was the profoundest mystery to him. Of English literature she appeared ignorant to a surprising degree, while he was devoted to Keats, Shelley, and Matthew Arnold — a point of strongest sympathy between himself and Cecil Urquhart. In short, they didn't seem to possess a single taste, accomplishment, or

subject of interest in common; conversation itself, under the circumstances, was apt to languish, and become a burden; and yet, to judge by appearances, there was something in Guy Miller attractive enough in her eyes to counterbalance all these disadvantages. Guy himself was puzzled, half-uneasy, and yet a wee bit flattered, as perhaps was no more than natural, considering his age.

He did not return to Stuart's rooms that night. Before he had finished his pipe Cecil Urquhart came in, rejoicing in his early release from the formalities of a dinner with the Provost, and the two sat smoking and chatting till past eleven. No reference, of course, was made to Mrs. Pottifer's note. Guy was perfectly aware that Cecil had noticed his association with the Professor's wife, and that beneath his friend's good-humoured raillery

upon the subject there lurked a feeling of real disapproval and regret. It was a pity, he often thought, that the fair Ianthe had not fixed on Cecil instead of on himself; Cecil, at any rate, would have been impervious to her wiles, and would always have been equal to any emergency. Whereas he—well, he was a donkey, as Cecil often assured him; and there was no saying to what lengths of folly he might not go, if only from a benevolent repugnance to giving pain.

Altogether it was with rather a sheepish feeling that he put on his hat and gloves next day, and started to keep his appointment. The Professor lived in a very modest tenement on the outskirts of the town, about a quarter of a mile from the river; and Guy, as he walked along, felt almost tempted to wish that one of Mrs. Pottifer's delightful earthquakes would

occur, and swallow it up before he had time to reach it. Nature, however, with her usual perversity, forbore to intervene; and in a few minutes the luckless youth found himself standing in the back drawing-room, nervously awaiting the entrance of his hostess.

"How good of you to come to me!" exclaimed Mrs. Pottifer, in her low, soft voice, her violet eyes sparkling with pleasure, as she appeared. "Sit down, and let me give you some tea. Do you know, I was almost afraid that something would occur to prevent your granting my request last night; and I was so glad when the answer came back all right!"

"You never supposed that I could send you any answer but the one I did," returned Guy, with a smile. "I was so sorry to hear your account of the Professor. Is he very ill?"

"Oh no," replied Mrs. Pottifer, pouring out the tea. "I think he has been overworking himself a little lately, and the day before yesterday he caught a violent cold. He's rather feverish just now, but he'll be well again in a week."

"I hope you won't let me keep you from him," said Guy, as he took the cup she handed him.

"Oh, he doesn't want me," returned Mrs. Pottifer, smiling. "He's perfectly happy alone; indeed, he told me just now not to keep buzzing about his room so, it rather disturbed him. So you see I'm quite at liberty."

Guy was conscious that she gave a side-long glance at him as she said this, and the thought embarrassed him for a moment.

"Do you know," she continued, after a nervous pause, "I do so often think of

that morning when I first met you. Do you remember it?"

"As if I were likely ever to forget it," answered Guy, laughing.

"Do you mean that—really?" pursued Ianthe, lifting her eyes to his. "Well, I don't think I'm ever likely to forget it, either. There are some people who, unconsciously I suppose, make a peculiar impression upon one; and I fancy you are one of them. I hope you don't think I'm saying anything very curious, do you?"

"That would depend upon whether the impression you refer to was a pleasant one or not," said Guy, trying to fence. "How about Miss Crewe? She could scarcely fail to leave a peculiar impression upon anybody, I should say—a very peculiar impression. I know she did on me."

"Miss Crewe is unique," replied Ianthe; "but—I don't feel very much interest in

Miss Crewe just now," she added, with a little hesitation. "Do you know, I was wanting to see you so much yesterday. I thought perhaps I should have met you in the Parks."

"I'm very sorry; I went for a walk to Burghsley," returned Guy. "Were you all alone?"

"Quite," said Ianthe; "the Professor had to lie up early in the afternoon, and I had no one to go out with. But tell me. Do you really like walking out with me?"

"You know I do," said Guy, trying not to look foolish.

"I wonder whether you would take me out for a walk to-morrow afternoon?" said Ianthe, wistfully.

"Certainly I will," replied Guy; "or say a row—a row up to Cockley Beck. I think you'd enjoy that more."

"Oh, that would be delightful!" cried Ianthe, softly, her whole face radiant with joy. "I have never been on the river with you yet. A row, by all means. How good of you to think of that!"

Guy smiled, and said he was very glad the idea pleased her.

"Only you mustn't ask Miss Crewe, you know," continued Ianthe, whose sudden rise in spirits inclined her to be jocular. "Or even your friend Mr. Urquhart. You won't, will you?"

"Of course not," laughed Guy. "We won't have anybody else. Have you ever been to Cockley Beck?"

"Never," replied Ianthe. "And I'm very glad I haven't; for now I shall see it for the first time with you."

Guy coloured, smiled, and began to feel rather embarrassed. Do what he would to keep off equivocal ground, she

always would return to it. Already he felt that he had fallen into a trap with his eyes open, and was half-inclined to regret his easy acquiescence in her proposal. But what could he have done?

Just then there came a loud ring and prolonged knocking at the front-door. Ianthe looked surprised, and not very well pleased; she had not expected any other visitors. Still, she had no reason to be dissatisfied with the results of her manœuvre, and it therefore cost her no great effort to welcome, with becoming effusiveness, the portentous Mrs. Ramsbottom, who had condescended to call on Mrs. Pottifer to make inquiries about the dear Professor. Guy lingered for a few minutes, and then rose to take a somewhat hypocritically formal leave; while Mrs. Ramsbottom honoured him with a supercilious stare, and, when he

had gone, condoled with Mrs. Pottifer upon "the obtuseness of those undergraduates, who had no more sense than to inflict their visits upon ladies whose husbands, as was perfectly well known, were lying ill in bed."

END OF VOL. I.

BILLING AND SONS, PRINTERS, GUILDFORD.
G., C. & Co.

By the same Author.

GIRALDI; or, THE CURSE OF LOVE.

A STORY OF THE SECTS.

SATURDAY REVIEW.

"*Giraldi* is undeniably a clever book; satirical, humorous and amusing; full of consistent sketching of character. . . It reads like the first effort in fiction of a man who has observed and thought. . . . . It is an original and readable novel."

ACADEMY.

"A very charming novel. . . Mr. Dering is not only a keen observer of persons, but has a cultured and easy flow of language; and he may be congratulated on having made a very creditable first attempt in fiction."

GLASGOW HERALD.

"As a tale of the sects, it is excellent—even brilliant. . . . The story itself is full of cleverness, and the conversations are managed with great skill. . . *Giraldi* is certainly one of the most interesting of recent attempts to combine the treatment of love with that of creeds and churches."

SCOTS OBSERVER.

"On the whole, *Giraldi* is one of the good novels of the season."

SCOTSMAN.

"There is more vigour and substance in it than in half-a-dozen ordinary circulating-library novels. . . There is plenty of sound sense and brilliant observation in *Giraldi*. . . . There is a delightful and unconventional old Duchess, and many other original, amusing, and charming characters."

WHITEHALL REVIEW.

"It is not much good beginning to find fault, as it is full of nothing else but faults, and is a very fair example of the utter incompetence of the author."

MANCHESTER EXAMINER.

"Mr. Dering is a writer of very considerable promise, from whom good work is to be expected in the future. . . . Pre-eminently a vivacious book. It has several attractive features, for its character-portraiture, even when not severely realistic, is at any rate realisable; its incidents and situations follow one upon another with commendable briskness, and the conversations are easy and fluent, with the battledore-and-shuttlecock action of real talk; but what gives the book its main charm is the quality just referred to—the unflagging vivacity which makes the reader feel that Mr. Dering wrote the book with the hearty gusto born of real delight in his task. . . It is needless to add that Mr. Dering is not deficient in constructive ability. . . A very readable and entertaining novel, which deserves to have a place on every library list."

SUNDAY TIMES.

"Always dull, and often vulgar."

BOOKSELLER.

"Mr. Dering may be congratulated on having written a clever novel."

PICCADILLY.

"Evidently the work of a man given to the luxury of contemplating his fellows and speculating on their ways. . . . Mr. Dering is evidently great on all subjects connected with ecclesiastical controversy, and there exists much in his writing which will be as thorns in the flesh of all varieties of belief and of various individuals who have none."

SCOTTISH LEADER.

"We have in these two volumes an uncommonly clever novel—so clever, indeed, as to excite surprise that the author has not managed to hit upon a better name for it. . . Some of the personages are exaggerated; but even in his exaggerations Mr. Dering is always sparkling and enjoyable. There is a great deal of flesh-and-blood interest in the story, and some subtle irony. . . But the book will be read less for its story, though that is interesting enough, than for its character delineations, which have the rare merits of freshness, piquancy, and real dramatic force."

MORNING POST.

"The author has produced an entertaining story, the most important moral of which consists in its exposure of the many evils caused by religious intolerance."

GUARDIAN.

"*Giraldi* is one of those very annoying novels which only a very clever person can write, but which many a less clever person would not wish to have written if he could. It is a book entirely destitute of beauty—harsh, unsympathetic, at many points grotesque. . . The satire is hard."

CHURCH TIMES.

"If a first literary effort, it is one of exceptional promise; for despite a certain occasional crudity there are tokens of invention, of keen observation of character, and of humour manifested, while the diction is firm, level, and as free from diffuseness as from flabbiness. . . . We may look for something important from Mr. Dering in course of time."

WEEKLY COMEDY.

"Ross George Dering, a name new to the world of fiction, has succeeded in his first venture to an extent which may well arouse the jealousy of many veteran caterers for the circulating libraries. A literary style which has obviously been refined and matured in more exacting fields of literature is here combined with many, if not all, of the sterling and necessary elements in the art of novel-writing. . . *Giraldi* is a very handbook of clerical types. . . It is obvious that, in this department, a master hand has appeared about whom it would be unsafe to discount the most sanguine prophecies."

ATHENÆUM.

"The most completely worthless novel we have seen for a long time."

ECHO.

"One of the most amusing novels of the season . . . deliciously funny. The reader who begins *Giraldi* is not likely to leave off before the finish. They are not lay figures, Mr. Dering's characters."

DAILY TELEGRAPH.

"Decidedly clever, and readable throughout."

SPECTATOR.

"The book has life, brightness, and humour of a rough-and-ready kind. . . The dedication is original, and originality of any kind has an appetizing quality."

FIDE
ET
FIDU
CIA

FIDE ET FIDUCIA